YET ANOTHER
MURDER MYSTERY
WRITTEN BY JABE
ENJOY :)

# ⚠ [ R E A D M E] ⚠

Yo. I'll be short(ish) here; this is mainly just a slightly more detailed version of the description.

First off, this book is unlike my other books, as it's humanized! But that means there WILL be some very sensitive topics, such as:

- swearing
- some depression
- blood, but not much actual gore
- death, obviously
- a bit of suicide :(

Also, there will be very little of anything relating to romantic relationships, besides a teeny-tiny bit here and there. There will also be nothing sexual in here. *(Side note 1: like my profile description says, I'm very unlikely to write anything else like this on here; I just got obsessed with the idea of a murder mystery with OS characters.)*

Second, the description already says the 5 object shows I'll be using characters from, but I'll say them again here. The full cast is revealed in the first actual chapter.

- BFB/TPOT (technically 2 shows but I'm counting it as one)
- Inanimate Insanity 2 (II2)
- Yet Another Gameshow (YAG)
- Animated Inanimate Battle (AIB)
- Village Of Objects (VOO)

BFB and II are there for obvious reasons. The other three shows I really enjoy watching (AIB IS SOOOOOOO GOOD) and I'd seriously recommend watching all three of them. (They all start out slowly, but get better as they continue.) I'll put the names of the channels you can watch them on just in case. if you haven't seen them then it'd also be good to at least check em out for the characters in this book lol

**YAG channel:** Epicbattler3
**AIB channel:** GatlingGroink57
**VOO channel:** Village Of Objects Official

*(Side note 2: I've also helped make recommended character assets and a couple props for VOO. It's not much, but I enjoy it.)*

Finally, if you're reading this, the first actual chapter is also published! Since the entire book has been written in advance, I'll be able to release a new chapter every weekend. I'll aim for Saturdays, but because I'm occasionally forgetful specifically when it comes to publishing chapters, I might post on a Sunday sometimes. Feel free to poke fun at me for forgetting to post.

I hope anybody who's reading will enjoy it as much as I did writing it!

# Summer "camp"

*(JUST A REMINDER FOR THOSE WHO DIDN'T READ THE "READ ME" CHAPTER THAT THIS IS HUMANIZED)*

Something jolted Flaggy awake. She wasn't sure what, but the moment she exited sleep, she knew something wasn't right.

Opening her eyes, the girl found herself in an unfamiliar room, lying on an unfamiliar bed. A cursory glance revealed that the room appeared to be some sort of log cabin, not unlike one you would find in a stereotypical summer camp. It was small - there were only two other beds that she could see, a single window, a closed door that Flaggy assumed led outside, and a side room with an open door that allowed her to see a toilet and a sink.

Flaggy sat up wearily and warily. Something moved beside her. Startled, she whirled around to see someone who seemed to be about her age looking at her.

"H-" he began, but got no farther. As Flaggy was discombobulated and surprised to see an unfamiliar boy right next to her with no idea if he was friendly or not, she did something completely understandable and instinctively lashed out.

Her fist connected with his face, making a sickening *CRACK* and causing the boy to stumble backwards. "Oh, gosh!" Flaggy gasped. "I-I'm so sorry! I didn't mean to- are you alright??"

She got up, but the boy held out a hand to stop her. "I think I'm fine." He slowly took his hand away from his face. Somehow, his nose wasn't bleeding, and looked good overall. "I'm pretty resilient."

"Still, though, I swear I didn't-"

"It's ok! I probably shouldn't have been so close to you like that." He stuck out his hand. "I'm TV."

She took it cautiously. "My name's Flaggy. Do you have any idea where we are? Or how we got here?" She glanced around the cabin again, but spotted nothing new.

TV shook his head. "No idea. My-" He hesitated. "Yeah. I don't know." Flaggy took a quick moment to inspect TV. He had darker skin, short black hair, and was wearing a black t-shirt with some logo on it and dark gray pants that went down to about halfway below his knees. On his head were a pair of goggles, and on his right wrist was what looked like the latest Meeple watch.

Belatedly, Flaggy realized she didn't know what *she* was wearing and looked down. Her most used t-shirt, adorned with stripes of light and dark green, had made it with her to wherever this place was. She was also wearing looseish gray pants and generic shoes that don't merit a description. She patted her head and, sure enough, the silvery gray beanie that Flaggy had owned since she was little was up there, covering the top part of her long green hair.

The front door to the cabin opened and Flaggy jumped. Another boy, looking to be a bit younger, entered the room. He had salt-and-pepper hair and was wearing rectangular glasses, a black-and-white checkered shirt, and peach-colored pants.

He held up the sheet of paper he was holding. "Uh... I found... this, on the outside... of the front door." He spoke haltingly, like he had to remember what each word meant before speaking it. Then he noticed Flaggy. "Oh, hey. You're... awake."

"This is Dicey." TV gestured at the new boy. "Dicey, this is Flaggy."

"Nice to meet you!" Flaggy said, trying to be cheerful despite the weirdness of the situation. Dicey waved at her shyly.

"What does the note say?" TV prompted.

Dicey looked down at his hands. "It says to, er... 'meet everyone in the clearing in front of the mess hall to get started.'"

"Everyone? You mean there's more people here?" Flaggy asked. Dicey just shrugged.

TV gently took the note and inspected it himself. "Seeing as how we're at the mercy of whoever or whatever brought us here, the most logical course of action would be to do as this note says. But where is this said 'mess hall?'"

Dicey pointed in a vague direction out the door. "There are wooden signs outside."

"Great. Then let's go."

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The trio exited their cabin, finding that they were in some sort of forest. A minute's worth of walking along a dirt path and following signs led them to encounter several other people, a few of which Flaggy actually recognized.

Finally, the now-larger crowd reached the clearing in front of the supposed mess hall. About ten other people were already there, waiting. "Finally!" a gray-haired girl called out. She sounded annoyed. "Brain, that's everyone, right?"

A boy with round glasses and very pink hair quickly glanced at the newcomers. "It appears so. Seven cabins, each with three people in them - except for mine, which only had me and Marshmallow - that equals twenty. We're all here."

"Good. Then maybe we can finally learn about WHATEVER THE HELL IS GOING ON!"

Another boy stepped forwards. This one was wearing a white turtleneck, a tweed flat cap, and long, light gray pants. "Maybe we can start out by introducing ourselves? I'd love to get to know all of you more!" Brain and two others near him glared at the other boy, but everyone else seemed to agree.

An awkward moment passed before the turtleneck boy chuckled. "I guess I'll go first, then," he said nervously. "Hi, everyone! My name's Bone! I go to Animated Inanimate Boarding School."

*(school names are hard to come up with so sue me)*

"Animated Inanimate Boarding School?" questioned a slightly pudgy boy from behind Flaggy. She thought he went to her school. "I know that place! That's one of the high schools in the state I live in!"

"Same here," commented a white-haired girl. After a bit of quick questioning, they learned that everyone there was from one of five high schools in the same state - BFD High, Inanimate Academy, the Yoyle Arts and Games School, Animated Inanimate Boarding School, or Orion Vocational.

"Why don't we introduce ourselves in order of the schools we go to?" a girl wearing a brown shirt and a long green skirt asked. "Starting with Animated Inanimate Boarding School, since Bone's already introduced himself."

"Great idea!" someone piped up from the crowd.

The introductions continued. The pudgy boy was named Bowling Ball, who transferred into Flaggy's school, Orion Vocational, sometime last year. Two others that she recognized, Conditioner and Macaroni And Cheese, were also from there. Brain and Bone, plus the other boy and girl who had glared at Bone earlier - their names were Envelope and Fireball - were from Animated Inanimate Boarding School. TV hadn't actually attended BFD High yet, but he was in the process of transferring over to it. Three other girls, Flower, Barf Bag, and Bottle, also attended it. The gray-haired girl from earlier (3D-Printed Naily), a boy named Wario Land 4, a girl named Marble, and Dicey all went to the Yoyle Arts and Games School.

Finally, the last four people introduced themselves, and they were all from Inanimate Academy. Two of them were girls, named Suitcase and Marshmallow. One of the boys, Cheesy, had just spewed out a terrible pun that made everyone groan. Everyone, except for the last boy who hadn't said a single word yet.

Cheesy glanced down, as the kid next to him was shorter than he was. "Well?" he prompted. "What's your name, kiddo?"

The boy didn't say anything for a moment. In fact, it looked like he

wasn't even paying attention, as his eyes were unfocused. He had very short dirty blond hair, and was only wearing dark brown overalls and a beige shirt underneath them. He was barefoot, and looked considerably younger than the rest of them.

"Uh, hello?" Conditioner asked from a few feet away. "Are you going to stop wasting our time, or what?"

Suitcase studied the boy. "Hang on, I think I recognize him. Well, I don't know his name, but I'm pretty sure he goes to the middle school near Inanimate Academy."

Slowly and hesitantly, the boy looked around at everyone else, than began to make movements with his hands. "What is he doing?" Dicey wondered out loud.

"Oh! He's speaking sign language!" Bottle chirped. Then she scratched her head. "I don't actually know any sign language, though."

"I do." Cheesy leaned down, so that he was at the kid's level. "Can you repeat that, buddy?"

The boy paused, then redid the hand movements. "Box? Your name's Box?" Cheesy asked.

"Yeah, that was it!" Suitcase snapped her fingers.

Box nodded. Cheesy smiled and wrapped an arm around his shoulders. "Good to meet ya, Box! Once we get you to open up, I'm sure you'll be a real container of fun!"

Cheesy slapped his knee as everyone groaned again. Two puns in one sentence... it was almost too much.

"Well. Now that that's taken care of..." Flower asked, sufficiently annoyed. "Does *anyone* know what we're doing here?"

Silence.

"Great," Flower huffed. "So I'm stuck here with a bunch of people who I barely know and who barely know me."

Suitcase smiled. "Hey, it's probably not all bad! Who knows? Maybe this weird gathering/kidnapping thing will turn out to be something good!"

"I'm afraid that you're very wrong," a new voice said. Suddenly - there wasn't any warning, he was just *there* - a man appeared in front of the crowd, making everyone jump. He looked to be in his mid-twenties or so. His bright green eyes would have dominated his appearance, if everything else he wore hadn't also been green and white. T-shirt, cargo shorts, neck bandanna, socks with sandals *(ew),* and a baseball cap with the words "Beach Hunk" printed on them... all white and green. Even the man's *skin* was almost completely snow white. The only thing that was a different color was the Wild West-style revolver holster belt around his waist, revolver included.

A smile broke out on the man's face. "Welcome, everyone! My name's Oodle the Doodle, and I'll be your camp counselor. Who's ready to be part of a murder mystery?"

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FINALLY PUBLISHED!! I'm super excited to actually be able to start posting chapters for this story. Partially because it was very fun to make, but also partially because of this amazing art that comes with it!

*[DISCLAIMER: **I DID NOT MAKE THE ART BELOW.** I came up with the character designs, but three separate people were commissioned for this art piece - Funfunny8, ZestyZapz, and my sister Oreo. They all did an INCREDIBLE job, and I'm so glad I commissioned them for this!]*

- 3D-Printed Naily, Bowling Ball, Brain, Envelope, Fireball, Flower, Macaroni and Cheese, Marble, Suitcase, and Oodle were drawn by Funfunny8
- Bone, Bottle, Box, Cheesy, Dicey, Flaggy, Marshmallow, TV, and Wario Land 4 were drawn by KittKattea
- Barf Bag and Conditioner were drawn by my sister Oreo

# Rules of the game

The world almost seemed frozen in time for an unfathomably long moment. Then, 3D-Printed Naily broke the spell by shouting, "What. The *FUCK?!"*

Everyone else began to yell and protest at both each other and Oodle, the total noise level getting louder and louder with each passing second.

"Is he serious??"

"No, he can't be. This has to be some sort of elaborate prank!"

"WE'RE ALL GOING TO DIE!!"

"No we're not, Fireball!"

"Oodle, is your last name really 'Doodle?'"

"Is your middle name really *'the?'"*

"Guys!" Oodle shouted, but nobody heard him. "GUYS, if you let me SPEAK, I can answer- oh, for..." The green-themed man cupped his hands over his mouth and yelled at the top of his lungs. ***"GUYS!!!"***

Somehow his voice was amplified to the level of a megaphone. That caused everyone to quiet down and turn towards him. "Finally," he said. "Now, I need to tell you the rules of-"

"You can't be serious about this," Conditioner said from amidst the crowd.

" 'fraid I am."

"But why??" Marble shouted. "Why would you take a bunch of kids and put them in... a mock *summer camp*... to kill each other? And

how?"

Oodle raised his hands in surrender. "I'm not really allowed to tell you. All I can say is that I was gifted abilities by a group of powerful people who told me to do this."

"But-"

"Look," he said sternly. "If you don't let me explain the rules, then I'll just kill the lot of you and get a different set of twenty students, alright?"

Marble snapped her mouth shut.

Oodle gulped. He really didn't want to do this, but he had no choice. So he put on another weak smile and continued. "Anyway! There will be one murderer, chosen randomly. The very basic premise of this game is to figure out who that is. If you solve the mystery, then the murderer is killed and everyone else gets to go home."

Wario Land 4 raised his hand. Oodle pointed at him. "When will the murderer be picked?" WL4 asked.

"Oh, they've already been chosen, and they already know about it." Several people glanced around them, uneasy. "The killer's only allowed to off one person at a time. When you find a body, you'll have to decide who you all think the killer is. You already know what happens if you're right. If you're wrong... well, the accused dies anyway, and the game continues until either the murderer is found, or they're the last one standing."

Flower crossed her arms defiantly. "What if we don't want to participate? What happens if the murderer doesn't kill anyone, or just tells someone else that they're the murderer?"

Oodle sighed. He *really* didn't want to tell them this part. "If anyone breaks a rule, then their family dies."

Various cries of distress arose from the crowd of students. Oodle couldn't truly be mad at them - this time, he waited a minute for them to stop on their own. "You guys done? There are two more things I need to tell you. First, I have maps of the area here for you

all." He snapped his fingers, and suddenly, maps appeared in everyone's hands, startling them.

"Wow. This looks like it was drawn by a child," 3D remarked.

"Hey!" Oodle put his hands on his hips. "I'll have you know that my art's been improving recently!"

Marble studied the map carefully. "Uh, did you mean to put the location of your cabin on this thing?"

The counselor looked surprised. "Whoops. That's an oversight." He snapped his fingers again, and his cabin faded away from everyone's maps. "Much better. Forget you saw anything."

Marble just hummed to herself.

"There's a considerable amount of forest that you can roam around in," Oodle continued, "although there's nothing of interest there, and it's kinda dense. About half a mile in all directions past the map border is a barrier. You can't get past it. That's not a rule, it's just a fact."

"Of course we're trapped here," Marshmallow muttered.

"And finally, a sort of special extra rule. You guys get one - *ONE* - pass. This means that if you don't have enough evidence to convict someone after a kill, then you can choose to *not* convict them. But be careful! Once this pass is used, it's gone forever, and afterwards you will *always* have to choose someone to pay for the murderer's crimes. So use it wisely."

A pause. "Is that it?" Mac asked.

"Yup. Now, I'll be off. At least, until someone has-"

"WAIT."

Oodle winced inwardly as Fireball stepped forwards. He was hoping that nobody would recognize him. "I know you," Fireball said slowly. "You're one of the new teachers at Animated Inanimate High!"

"THAT'S RIGHT!" Envelope agreed loudly. "I HAD YOU AS MY ENGLISH TEACHER! YOU WERE TERRIBLE!"

"Oh come on, that's hardly fair-"

"You're literally forcing us into a killing game," Cheesy interrupted. "I think we're allowed to throw *oodles* of insults at you." **knee slap**

Marshmallow facepalmed. "This really isn't the time..."

Exasperated, Oodle threw his hands into the air. "Yes, I used to teach at that school. So what?"

"WHY HAVE YOU BETRAYED US, OODLE??" Envelope shouted. The counselor in question just put his face into his hands and promptly vanished. Brain huffed. "Some people just can't handle criticism."

"Get back here, you coward!" Flower screamed.

"Forget it," Suitcase muttered. "It's not worth it anyway..."

There was another moment of awkward silence as the weight of the situation began to settle upon everyone there. One of them was really a murderer? People would die? It seemed unreal.

Fireball finally broke the silence. "You know, I'm not sure Oodle is actually telling the truth."

"How come?" Bottle questioned.

"He may have been a bad teacher, but from what I remember from school, he was a great person! There's no way he would really do this to us!"

Marble snorted. "In case you haven't looked around, I think he really is."

Fireball pouted. "Well, I don't believe it. I'm going to go find this so-called 'barrier'!"

The warm-colored girl turned around and ran roughly northwards. "Fireball! Wait! You shouldn't go alone!" Bowling Ball cried out. He rushed after her, and the two quickly passed the mess hall and were swallowed by the trees.

Another moment of silence. "Well, that was something," WL4 said. He turned to everyone else. "Who wants to explore this place with me before we all die horrible deaths?"

# No way out

"This is too much," muttered Conditioner. "I'm going back to my cabin to sleep for a year." Flaggy, Dicey, and Suitcase all followed her back to their various cabins.

WL4 grunted. "Those guys have no sense of adventure. I'm gonna go check out the archery range."

"I suppose I'll join you," Mac said. The duo strolled off to the west together, Brain eventually trailing behind them.

It was a short, quiet walk, and before long, all three of them arrived at a large rectangular clearing. In front of them was a rack of bows and two full quivers of arrows, and at both of the clearing's long ends, they could see several red and white targets lined up at various distances. WL4 rushed forwards and grabbed one of the bows, trying to draw the string back. "Geez, these things are strong!" He could barely pull it halfway.

Mac took a bow and arrow for himself and glanced at a target in the distance. Slowly drawing back the string entirely, he raised the bow and fired. The arrow his the target about halfway between the edge and the bullseye. Mac grunted in satisfaction, then turned to see Brain staring at him. "What?"

"Nothing," Brain responded plainly.

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TV pushed the door to the mess hall open and flicked on the lights. Bone, Marble, and Marshmallow followed him in. It was a large, rectangular room which was accommodated with many more chairs and tables than the twenty campers needed.

While the others glanced around, TV headed over to the far wall

where there was a double door labelled 'Kitchen.' Inside was a kitchen obviously meant to feed a much larger group of people. Rummaging around the room, TV found enough materials to make a dozen different meals and still have some leftover. He rubbed his hands gleefully.

Marble strolled in to find him placing three pans on the large stove. "What in the world are you doing?"

"Cooking," TV answered simply. "I refuse to let this whole thing get to me, so I'm making cheese quesadillas for everyone's dinner tonight. Would you like anything extra in yours?"

"No." Marble opened up various cabinets and began to search through them, recoiling when she encountered some garlic. She quickly grabbed three cans of beans and a can opener, then located two water bottles and filled them up at one of the sinks. "What are *you* doing?" TV wondered curiously.

"Nunya."

"Nunya?"

"Nunya business."

Puzzled, TV simply watched her go as she left the room.

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Cheesy kicked down the door to the Arts and Crafts cabin energetically. "Hi-yah!"

From behind him, 3D-Printed Naily glared at the yellow-haired boy. "Was that really necessary?"

"Of course it was!"

She just grumbled something about stupid boys and went inside. Cheesy and Box went in right after. Two long, rectangular tables with benches on either side took up a large portion of the room. A huge shelf on one wall had supplies galore - printer paper, poster paper, markers, crayons, charcoal pencils, tubes of paint, paintbrushes, glue,

colored beads - you name it, they were probably on that shelf. A set of stairs in the back of the room led to a second floor.

3D strolled over to a wooden easel, where a blank canvas was sitting. She looked around, grabbed a paintbrush and a bucket of green paint, and began to think. "I didn't know you liked to paint," Cheesy remarked.

The gray-themed girl dipped her paintbrush into the bucket and glared at him again. "I go to the Yoyle *Arts* and Games school, dumbass."

"Well, *excuse* me!" Cheesy huffed and turned around, seeing Box already doodling something on a sheet of paper. "At least Box here is nice and peaceful."

3D just grumbled again and began to paint.

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Bone and Marshmallow exited the mess hall in time to see Bowling Ball and Fireball emerge from the forest. Fireball was holding a hand to her face and hopping forwards on one foot, being supported by BB. Blood was dripping down from her chin, and her ankle looked swollen. "Oh my gosh!" Bone gasped. "What-"

"Sgrew obb, Bone," Fireball snapped. Her voice sounded nasally from holding her nose.

Bowling Ball glanced apologetically at Bone. "Let's get her into the infirmary first," he said. Bone nodded and followed them from a distance.

Marshmallow decided to follow as well, matching Bone's pace. "You know, I've noticed that the other three kids from your school don't seem to like you," she said, "but you seem alright to me. Why is that?"

Bone smiled nervously. *"None* of the kids in my school like me. I have no idea why!"

"Really? Yeesh. Harsh life..."

"Oh, it's not so bad." Bone waved his hand dismissively. "I just don't talk to most of the other kids and they usually leave me alone. At least the teachers don't hate me."

That didn't really clear anything up for Marshmallow, but she never got the chance to press on as they arrived at the infirmary. It was really close to the mess hall, but much smaller. Inside were two beds, separated by a curtain, that took up about half the room. A rolling cart with various pill bottles and other medical supplies on it rested underneath a small cabinet on the wall.

Fireball carefully sat down on one of the beds, with Bowling Ball and Barf Bag looking over her. *Barf Bag must have already been in here,* Bone thought. "What happened?" Barfy asked. Her multicolored eyes shifted hues as she surveyed the damage.

"Fireball was just running through the forest when she ran into something," Bowling Ball explained. "And not a tree or anything - it was like an invisible wall."

"Yeah, and I broge by ngose!" Fireball took her hand away from her face, making them all flinch. Her nose was bent at an unnatural angle and bleeding profusely. "Afder dat, I sdumbled around and slibbed on sobething. I thing I sbrained by angle, doo..."

She lifted up her right leg and, wincing, tried to pull up her pant leg. Her ankle was *very* swollen and *very* red. "Yikes," Barf Bag muttered. "Let's get you fixed up. Bowling Ball, can you go see if there's any ice packs in the freezers at the mess hall?"

"Sure!" He sidled out the door.

"Fireball, I'm going to try to set your broken nose. But you might want to brace yourself."

"Why?"

"Because... well, you'll probably be in excruciating pain for about three seconds."

"Nod lige I don'd already hurd a lod now..." Fireball muttered.

Barf Bag leaned forwards and gently placed two fingers on either side of Fireball's nose. Then, with a sudden and deft movement, she shifted it back into place with a sickening *crack*. "Shid!" Fireball yelped. Her hands shot to her nose and the held it gently. "Ow ow ow ow ow!"

"I told you to brace yourself!" Barf Bag protested.

Fireball very carefully felt her nose. The bleeding had stopped. "Well, thangs, I subbose. Whad aboud my angle?"

"We need to wait for Bowling Ball to come-"

"Back!" Bowling Ball barged into the room, juggling an ice pack from hand to hand. Bottle and Envelope popped their heads into the doorway right after. "WE HEARD YELLING," stated Envelope loudly. "IS SOMEONE BEING MURDERED?"

"N-" Bone started, but Envelope had already left the moment he saw him. "Aw," Bone said sadly.

"Fireball's not going to die, she just got a couple of injuries," Marshmallow summarized. "She'll be fine."

Barf Bag took the ice pack from Bowling Ball and gently pressed it against Fireball's sprained ankle. "Keep this here for about 20 minutes every couple of hours or so," she told her. "In about a week, it should be mostly healed, but I'm sure there's some crutches somewhere that you could-"

"Thangs, but I'b good bor now," Fireball stopped her, her voice still sounding nasally. "I thing I'll jusd sleeb here donighd. I'be had enoub advenduring bor doday abder binding Oodle's... barrier..."

She drifted off, and an uneasy dread-filled silence seeped into the room. "So this is it, huh?" Bowling Ball whispered. "There's really no way out of this killing game."

"Don't say that!" Bottle clapped Bowling Ball on the back with a wide smile on her face. "I'm sure we'll all get out of here just fine!"

None of them believed her.

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Barf Bag opted to keep Fireball company for the time being. As Marshmallow, Bottle, Bone, and Bowling Ball left the infirmary, they saw various other kids entering the new ball. Marshmallow squinted at the setting sun. "Jeez," she muttered. "Is it already evening?"

"I think it was pretty late in the afternoon when we all woke up here," Bowling Ball pointed out. "But now that you mention it, I'm starving. I wonder if TV's done with the food yet!"

"Let's go find out."

Marsh and BB sped up to get inside the mess hall quicker while Bone tapped Bottle on her shoulder. "What place did you explore?" he asked curiously.

"The lake!" Bottle replied. "I went there with Flower. There was a small wooden dock, as well as a couple canoes and oars. Nothing very exciting..."

"Ah."

The duo walked into the mess hall, where a delicious aroma greeted them. Several others were already sitting down, whether on their own or in little groups, while others were still walking towards empty seats. (There were lots of seats.)

Cheesy was firing puns away at Box, who just sat there mutely. WL4, however, absorbed the jokes with relish. Bowling Ball and Marshmallow had just sat down together, and Envelope was talking loudly to Mac, but everyone else sat alone. Other than Fireball and Barf Bag, who were both still in the infirmary, everyone seemed to already be inside the building; except Suitcase.

Just as Bone and Bottle found separate seats, TV and Flaggy exited the kitchen, each holding a large platter with quesadillas on them. "Dinner is served!" TV said happily.

"Finally," 3D muttered from the table next to Bone's.

TV and Flaggy began to hand out quesadillas to each individual

person. Most of them accepted and began to chow down, but a few got up to get some other food from the kitchen.

Just as Bone took one from Flaggy, Suitcase walked in the door, slowly heading towards where Marshmallow and Bowling Ball were sitting. "Oh hey, Suitcase! Where were you?" BB asked after swallowing a large bite of tortilla and cheese.

Suitcase took a moment before answering. "Just thinking about things." BB decided not to press.

Any chatter that was present before died off as the mess hall filled with the sounds of content chewing. TV had done a good job. Then, without warning, Oodle appeared in the middle of the floor. "Hi again!" he greeted, trying to act cheerful.

Several people spat out or choked on their food in surprise. "What the hell are *you* doing here?" Conditioner protested.

"I just came by again because I forgot something earlier. The color code!" He snapped his fingers and colored rubber bracelets appeared on everyone's right wrists. "These are just to help you remember which cabin you're in, in case you forget. Your corresponding cabin color is not only on your maps, but the numbers on the doors of each cabin are also painted accordingly."

Marshmallow glared at Oodle while thumping Suitcase on the back, who had a sizable chunk of food lodged in her throat. "So what? We're not allowed to take these bracelets off or go to other people's cabins, because it's against the rules?"

"Not at all! Feel free to take off the bracelets or enter other's cabins - with their permission, of course! They're just a way to help the more, erm, *forgetful* of you to remember where you're sleeping."

3D instantly tore off her bracelet and flung it in a random direction. It landed on Bottle's head, but the girl didn't seem to mind. A few others removed their bracelets as well.

Oodle waved at them. "That's all for tonight. Adios, folks!" He vanished.

After that, the mood was more subdued. The camp counselor's temporary appearance had reminded them all of the situation they were in, and very few people said anything. Even Cheesy's jokes sounded halfhearted. The rest of the night was also uneventful - Marshmallow brought cheese quesadillas to Barf Bag and Fireball in the infirmary, and after dinner, everyone other than Fireball went back to their cabins to get some sleep.

Tomorrow would probably be a long day.

**most of this isn't explicitly made clear later on so here's the list of who's staying in which cabins**

**Cabin 1: Flaggy, TV, Dicey**
**Cabin 2: Box, Fireball, Conditioner**
**Cabin 3: Bottle, 3D-Printed Naily, Cheesy**
**Cabin 4: Bone, Bowling Ball, Barf Bag**
**Cabin 5: Marble, Suitcase, Envelope**
**Cabin 6: Mac, Flower, WL4**
**Cabin 7: Marshmallow, Brain**

# Only the beginning

3D-Printed Naily yawned as she entered the infirmary semi-early in the morning. She froze when seeing someone lying in one of the beds, but relaxed after remembering that Fireball had stayed the night. "Oh, you're still here. Mind if I rant for a bit?"

No answer. Fireball was sound asleep.

"Good. Cause I wouldn't have cared, whatever answer you gave me." 3D snorted, then winced as she rummaged through a medical cabinet. "God, I have *the* worst headache of my life. I got no sleep last night whatsoever - Bottle's a ditzy moron who will ramble on and on endlessly about her team and her stupid friends, and Cheesy just wouldn't stop with those god-awful PUNS." She slammed the door closed and opened a different one. "So now I've got to come in here and look for Tylenol or Aspirin because I've got two idiots as cabinmates."

3D paused and turned to look at Fireball. "Wish I had you as a cabinmate instead - you apparently sleep like a rock." She chuckled.

Fireball stayed still. Unnaturally still. In fact, it was at this point that 3D noticed Fireball wasn't moving at *all.* No twitching eyelids from REM sleep, no shifting around to get comfortable in bed, and worst of all, no rising and falling of her chest.

A cold feeling trickled down her spine. "...uh... F... Fireball?" she asked warily. She stepped forwards next to the bed and cautiously placed her fingers on the girl's neck, checking for a pulse. There was none, and her neck was cold.

3D recoiled. "Aw, *fuck."* She glanced around the room and spotted something sharp on the little shelf next to the bed. She very carefully picked it up and inspected it. "An empty syringe..." Looking back to Fireball, she saw something else that confirmed her worst fears - a

tiny puncture wound on the girl's neck.

"...so excited to start preventing death!" a voice said, growing louder. 3D whipped her head around to see Bottle and Barf Bag walk into the infirmary. They both froze upon seeing Fireball's body. "Aaaaaand Fireball is dead!" Bottle concluded.

3D tried to calm her heart. "I just found her like this a moment ago. I don't know who did it."

"You sure about that?" Barf Bag's gaze was fixed on something to the right of 3D's face. She turned to look and belatedly remembered that the empty syringe was still in her hand. "Shit!" 3D flung it away from her,suddenly realizing how bad the whole situation looked.

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A couple minutes later, mostly everyone had gathered outside the infirmary, as it wasn't small enough to hold all the kids inside. "Alright," Barf Bag addressed everyone. "I hate to have to say something like this, but... Fireball is dead."

A heavy gloom settled over the group. They mostly knew this would happen sooner or later, but hearing that someone was actually dead - and so soon, too - really brought the reality crashing home. Several of them had to hold back a sob. "A few minutes ago, Bottle and I came into the infirmary together," Barf Bag continued. "Fireball was already dead on one of the hospital beds, and 3D-Printed Naily was standing next to her, holding an *empty syringe."*

Almost comically, everyone turned to look at 3D at the same time, who was standing off to the side with her arms crossed and an angry look on her face. "Lies," she stated plainly.

"...3D?" Flower asked hesitantly.

Bottle raised her hand. "Barf Bag wasn't lying, 3D, and you know that! I can back her up!"

"What I *meant* was that I didn't kill Fireball," the gray-haired girl elaborated.

"Then who did?" Conditioner asked.

3D threw her hands into the air in exasperation. "I don't fucking know! All I know is that I went in a couple minutes before they did and found Fireball already dead! The syringe was on the table next to her and I only picked it up to look at it!"

Brain snorted. "Likely story."

"Yeah!" Cheesy agreed. "This one seems like a no-brainer!" Thankfully, everyone else was too preoccupied with glaring at 3D to notice the pun.

Mac spoke up. "I hate to say this, 3D, but you're the best lead we've got here. The *only* lead, really."

"I can't believe this," 3D muttered, incredulous. "You're all going to kill me because I was in the wrong place at the wrong time?!"

People had doubts, of course, but looking at the little info they had, they couldn't help but agree. "But where's Oodle?" WL4 wondered.

On cue, Oodle materialized next to him. "Jesus!" WL4 yelped. "Stop DOING that!"

Oodle shrugged apologetically, then turned to face the rest of the crowd. "So you guys choose 3D-Printed Naily to die?" he asked.

Several kids muttered under their breath too quietly for anyone to hear. "We need at least a majority vote," Oodle clarified. People began to nod hesitantly.

"No, no no no NO!" 3D screeched. "You *IDIOTS!* You're killing the wrong person! With this level of stupidity, there's no WAY any of you are surviving this murder mystery!"

Oodle simply sighed regretfully and took out the revolver from its holster, pulling back the gun's hammer. A resounding *click* reached everyone's ears as he raised the weapon.

"Wait." Dicey pushed through everyone, as he was one of the shorter kids. "I just went into the... infirmary, and the body was... cold."

"SO WHAT?" Envelope asked.

"Well, don't bodies... take a while to... get cold?"

Barf Bag nodded, then gasped as a realization hit her. "Oh..."

Dicey continued. "So... if 3D *had* killed Fireball right before... Barf Bag and Bottle walked in..."

"...then the body would still be warm," Barf Bag finished.

3D got a sparkle in her eyes. "Yes. Yes! See? I TOLD you I didn't kill her!!"

"But now what? We don't have any other clues on who the killer is," Bone pointed out. "We have to choose *someone,* and picking randomly is pointless."

"About that..." Oodle scratched the back of his head. "Now that you've already chosen 3D, even though she's *not* the murderer, I still have to kill her."

Silence. 3D face-palmed. "You've got to be f-"

*bang*

Everyone except Box jumped as 3D's head whipped sideways from the force of the bullet. Lifeless, she hit the grass with a *thump.* They all stared at her body, disbelief and horror written clearly on their faces. Marshmallow looked away, doing her best not to throw up.

Oodle lowered the gun, his face solemn. "I'm sorry."

"You're *sorry?* Are you KIDDING me?" Conditioner spat. "You're forcing one of us to *kill* everyone else. You can't possibly be *sorry!"*

Oodle was quiet for a moment. "You don't know that," he whispered. Then he was gone.

Nobody said anything for a full minute before TV slowly walked up to 3D's body. The grass around her head was now stained with blood. "What... what about her body?"

Flower glanced at it in disgust, but there was also a hint of sorrow in her trembling face. "Oodle will probably get rid of it later," she remarked, her voice wavering.

As people finally began to wander off, Suitcase rubbed her forehead, where a headache was blossoming. *What a morning,* she thought to herself.

Suddenly, the girl realized something. When Barf Bag woke everyone up earlier, only one of her cabinmates was still in bed. She assumed the other had already left, but looking around now, they were nowhere to be seen. "Wait..."

Flaggy and Bowling Ball glanced at her. "What is it?"

"...where's Marble?"

# Marbles were lost

Most of the rest of the day was spent searching for Marble, with the idea that she was either hiding as the murderer, or lying dead somewhere as another victim. They searched every place they could think of, but other than an unmade bed in Cabin 5, there was no trace.

"WHERE COULD SHE BE?" Envelope asked to nobody in particular after they met up in front of the mess hall again.

"I have an idea," offered TV. "Yesterday, when I started making the quesadillas, Marble came into the kitchen and took some food and a bottle of water. The only conclusion I can draw with this is that she went out into the forest."

Marshmallow scratched her head. "But why would she do that? Something smells fishy here."

TV just shrugged. "There's a considerable amount of forest out there, and going through it does not look easy. So it'd be almost impossible to find her. Until she appears again, I suggest we stop worrying about it."

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Flower sat on her bed, staring at her phone dejectedly. For some reason, Oodle had let those who owned phones keep them, although - obviously - there wasn't any internet or cell service, so she couldn't try calling for help even if she wanted to.

But that wasn't what she was doing. Flower was actually looking at an old picture of her and 3D-Printed Naily when they were about 11 years old. They had known each other since they were very little and went to the same elementary school, before 3D moved to another town after 5th grade. They went to separate middle and high schools

and eventually grew apart, but Flower still had many fond memories of her. In the photo, the two had arms around each other's shoulders and were grinning at the camera. It was taken by her mother on an older phone and was later transferred to Flower's newer one.

A single tear rolled down her cheek. She wiped it away quickly. So much had changed since then... in high school, most emotions were perceived as a weakness (at least, by a lot of the "popular" girls) and so Flower chose to never betray any in public. But the murder mystery made it nigh impossible.

"Who's that?"

Flower shrieked and leapt away from WL4, fumbling with her phone. She didn't even realize he had entered the cabin. "D-don't scare me like that, you creep!"

"What?" he asked, genuinely curious. "I was just wondering."

Flower took a deep, shaky breath and wiped away her tear. "It's nobody."

"Doesn't seem like nobody to me. Don't think I didn't see that tear!" WL4 smiled slyly. "Come on. You always act like the stereotypical 'popular girl' - *oh, look at me, I have to shower twice a day and do a bunch of other pointless stuff to look perfect so that I can have a good social status!"* He said this last part in a high-pitched voice that sounded nothing like Flower's. "-but you ain't fooling me, gal." He hopped onto his own bed and crossed his legs as he sat. "So tell me. Who's your friend?"

Flower was at a complete loss for words. Slowly, almost in a trance, she sat back down on her bed. "It was 3D," she whispered.

WL4's smile melted. "Oh. Oh, shit."

"We were really good friends when we were younger, and then she m-moved away, and... and then..." She stopped talking, a few more tears soundlessly leaking from her eyes.

WL4 didn't move, but he did speak. "I've lost people, too. And 3D and I weren't exactly friends, like you two once were..." *In fact, she*

*despised me ever since I stole those 50 bucks from her.* He didn't voice this thought, though. "But she was a fun asshole. I enjoyed her company, and I'll miss her too."

They were both silent for another minute. "Well, I know I can be rude and arrogant-"

Flower snorted. "That's not even the half of it."

WL4 just grinned. "-and I'm not very good at giving advice, but if you ever need it, I'll probably be in the lounge, playing console games 24/7." WL4 slid off his bed and went out the open door.

Flower sniffed and wiped away the rest of her tears. Somehow, she felt a little better.

The next day, Bowling Ball was looking through the Arts and Crafts cabin when Marshmallow entered. He looked up. "Hey!" he greeted, waving at her.

She waved back at him. "Do you know where the more crafty supplies are?" the girl asked. "Like fuse beads, pipe cleaners, scissors, glue - that sort of stuff? I want to make a collage of some sorts."

"I don't. I'm actually looking right now, but most of the stuff on this floor seems to be more for regular drawing, or painting, or whatever."

"I think... those supplies are upstairs," spoke Dicey. Bowling Ball looked back at the younger boy, who was using watercolor paint - he was quiet enough that BB kept forgetting he was there. "Suitcase is... also up there."

Marshmallow smiled. "Great! Thanks... uh, Dicey?" The boy nodded. "Thanks, Dicey."

Bowling Ball stood up and the duo headed up the steps together. The second floor consisted of one hallway with two doors on each side. They entered the first door on the right, which was slightly ajar, to find several shelves filled with all sorts of things. "Score!" Marshmallow said.

Then they saw Suitcase, sitting in one of the corners, hugging her legs close to her chest. She was breathing rapidly and had a panicked look in her eyes. "Suitcase!" Bowling Ball cried. He and Marshmallow rushed over to the distressed girl. "Are you alright? What happened??"

Suitcase kept breathing rapidly. Marshmallow reached for her, but Suitcase put out a hand to stop her. "I'll... be fine..." she wheezed. "Just... gimme a minute."

After a few seconds her breathing began to slow, and she relaxed her body slightly. She closed her eyes. "I'm... alright," the girl said, still breathing hard but much more slowly now. "I'm alright. I'm good. It was just a panic attack."

"That looked rough," Marshmallow said sympathetically. "Do you want to talk about it?"

Suitcase shook her head. "I think it was just this whole situation that got me. I've been getting better at dealing with the attacks, but..." She didn't finish her sentence, but the other two knew what she meant.

Footsteps. Marshmallow glanced up to see Dicey walking in the hallway. He spotted them, froze, then slowly reached out and quietly

closed the door to their room.

"Then let's talk about something else!" Bowling Ball tried to lift the mood. "To get our minds off this place."

Suitcase smiled a little as BB and Marshmallow sat down on opposite sides of her. "Like what?"

BB scratched his chin. "What's up with Bottle?"

"Huh?"

"She's always going on about 'preventing death' or whatever, which I'm all for, but the phrasing seems a little weird."

"Oh!" Marshmallow giggled. "I know what you're talking about. Sometime last year, our school-" She gestured to Suitcase and herself. "-took some classes to visit Bottle's school. She's part of this group called... uhm..."

"Death P.A.C.T," Suitcase filled in.

"Yeah!"

Bowling Ball was confused. "That doesn't sound very... good."

"I thought the same thing at first, but it's just an acronym." Suitcase counted out to five on her hand. "**Death P**revention **A**nd **C**reating... **T**rust, I think. Bottle and seven others. They're dedicated to, well, preventing suicide and self-harm in the school by talking to students who might need it. They're basically a therapy group of sorts."

"Huh," BB said, interested. "That sounds like something more schools should have."

Marshmallow nodded agreement. "This may sound corny, but Bottle alone is like a beacon of light. Her goofiness and constant cheerful attitude really helps students get out of their funk! Or so I've heard."

"Yeah." Suitcase's smile slowly faded away as she remembered something sour. Under her breath, she mumbled, "She helped *me* once, too..."

Bowling Ball and Marshmallow exchanged surprised glances. But before either could respond, all three of them heard the sudden noises of someone falling down a set of stairs.

[There should be a GIF or video here. Update the app now to see it.]

**sorry not sorry**

# Roll the dice

"Oh no." Bowling Ball shot up and ran for the door. Marshmallow helped pull Suitcase to her feet and they followed.

The three of them ran downstairs to see Dicey sprawled at the bottom of the staircase. The metal railing right at the end was slightly dented, and blood was leaking from somewhere within his mess of salt-and-pepper hair. His left arm was trapped underneath his body, bent at an unnatural angle, and a container of beads he was presumably holding before had spilled all over the floor. One of the lenses of his glasses, which were bent and broken, had shattered completely. Marshmallow covered her mouth to prevent vomit from escaping.

Bowling Ball bent down to check Dicey's pulse when a flash of white caught his eye. He quickly looked towards the side door to see the tail end of something long flutter away. A scarf? He pointed. "I think the murderer just ran off!"

"We can't let them get away!" Marshmallow swallowed the bile in her throat, started running, almost tripped on the beads, then sprinted out the side exit. Suitcase gently lay her fingers on Dicey's neck, then sadly looked up at Bowling Ball and shook her head. The younger boy was already gone.

BB sat down hard. "Oh god. Oh god oh god..." Suitcase sat down next to him and they waited there in an uncomfortable quiet for two excruciating minutes.

The front door slammed open and several people barged in. Envelope, leading the charge, immediately slipped on several beads and fell to the floor almost comically. WL4 and Flaggy did the same, but Mac and Flower managed to slow down before tripping.

Mac saw Dicey's body and went pale. "Is he...?" he asked Suitcase and

Bowling Ball, not even able to finish the sentence. Suitcase just put her face in her hands, which was all the answer Mac needed.

As the others got up from the ground groaning, Marshmallow led Bone, Cheesy, TV, and Conditioner into the room. Conditioner just sighed the moment she saw Dicey's body. "God, here we go again."

Bone glared at her. "Couldn't you be a little more respectful than that? "Somebody just *died!"*

Flaggy glanced at Bone miserably, temporarily distracted from the sight of Dicey. He seemed much less timid and more confident than he had been the past two days, but before she could pursue that train of thought, Mac spoke up. "Let's not fight right now. I hate to say this, but we... we should try to figure out who the murderer was."

Conditioner mumbled something unintelligible but sat down on the nearest bench.

Bowling Ball looked up from the ground. "Well, Marshmallow, Suitcase, and I were all on the second floor when we heard someone push Dicey down the stairs. I think I saw someone running out the side door, but not who, so Marshmallow chased after them. Marsh, did you... ever... see who it was?"

She shook her head. "No. I ran as fast as I could, but I didn't see anyone until I ran into Bone, TV, and Cheesy together by the cabins. Conditioner encountered us when I was leading them back. But..." Marshmallow slowly turned to Flower, WL4, Mac, Envelope, and Flaggy. "...how did you guys know to come here?"

WL4 stuck a thumb over his shoulder to point at Envelope. "This guy led us here."

"I CAME INTO THE ROOM AND SAW DICEY FALL DOWN THE STAIRS ON HIS OWN," Envelope explained, "AND WENT TO THE CABINS TO FIND THE REST OF YOU."

"He fell on his own?" TV questioned. "In any normal scenario I could see that happening, but-"

"-this is anything *but* normal," Flower finished.

Cheesy pointed at Envelope. "Are you *sure* you didn't see anyone?"

"POSITIVE!"

"Suspicious..."

"WHAT? HOW?"

TV glanced between Cheesy and Envelope. Everyone else watching could almost see the gears turning. "What are you thinking, Cheesy?"

Cheesy scratched his chin. "Well, either we've got a very sneaky killer on our hands, or..."

"Or?" WL4 prompted.

"...or Envelope here could be lying."

"WHAT??" Envelope protested loudly. "THAT'S PREPOSTEROUS!"

Conditioner steepled her fingers against her temples. "So you're saying that Envelope killed Dicey?"

Cheesy spread his hands open. "Not exactly. I'm just saying that we should consider all the possibilities."

"So then let's consider another possibility."

Everyone glanced at Flaggy. She hadn't spoken a word since she entered, until now. Her eyes were red, yet no tears had fallen. "You said the murderer might be really sneaky, right? If that's the case, then maybe they managed to get past Marsh and the others and is still hiding upstairs, or somewhere else nearby."

The others contemplated this for a moment. Bone quickly counted everyone in the room. "There's twelve people here. Marble's been missing since yesterday, so that leaves Barf Bag, Bottle, Box, and Brain."

"Lotta B's," commented WL4 offhandedly.

"I left Box by his cabin," Cheesy said. "When Envelope arrived and

said that someone was dead, I didn't want the kid to see anything ugly."

"SO THEN WE SHOULD LOOK FOR ONE OF THE OTHERS! I'LL GO UPSTAIRS." Envelope got up off the floor and, casually stepping over Dicey's corpse, began to climb the stairs.

Cheesy got up as well and rushed after him. "Not sure I trust this guy yet!" he called out to the others. Conditioner shrugged and followed them. Marshmallow, Flaggy, Flower, and WL4 went out the side door, while Mac, TV, and Bone exited through the front. Before they knew it, Bowling Ball and Suitcase were the only ones left in the Arts and Crafts cabin once more.

BB looked at Dicey again, then at Suitcase. Her face was still buried in her hands. "You... alright?"

She didn't answer.

"Well, i-if you ever wanna talk, I'm here."

Still no answer. Hesitantly, BB stood up and followed Marsh and the others out the side door, leaving Suitcase alone.

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Flaggy's feet moved on their own. In reality, she was barely aware of what she had said earlier about looking for the others - most of her brain was occupied with the image of Dicey's broken body. As much as she tried to think about something else, she couldn't. At least with Fireball and 3D, she didn't know them very well. But Dicey shared a cabin with her and TV - hell, they had talked less than half an hour before he went off towards the Arts and Crafts cabin. It was just too real.

"Flaggy?"

"Huh?"

She shook her head and her train of thought stopped. She glanced next to her to see Bowling Ball matching her pace, looking concerned. He must have caught up to her without her noticing. "You

good?"

Flaggy breathed a deep sigh. "Not completely... but, I hope I'll pull through for-"

"Hey guys, the door here is ajar!" Marshmallow's voice interrupted both their conversation and some quiet whispering between Flower and WL4. They had reached the lounge, and indeed, the door was slightly open. Marsh gingerly pushed it open all the way and stepped inside. "Hello? Anyone home?"

She froze. *Uh-oh,* Flaggy thought. Before the green-haired girl could move, Marshmallow bolted outside, almost knocking Flower down, and violently emptied the contents of her stomach all over the grass. WL4 winced at the horrible retching sounds she made.

Flower strode inside the room, then immediately walked out again, her pace quickening. "Nope. Nope, nope, nope. I can't deal with this," she muttered before disappearing down the pathway. WL4, Bowling Ball, and Flaggy all glanced at each other nervously before entering the lounge to see for themselves.

It was a small room, about the size of the infirmary. A large television standing on a wooden dresser took up most of one wall, with multiple video game consoles on the floor next to it and a huge mess of wires. Taking up the opposite wall was a large couch, and on the couch was Barf Bag. She looked fine, except for the small hole in her neck, and the blood trickling down the front of her dress.

She was very dead.

# Lull

Envelope took the bullet.

Shot by Oodle, after being chosen as the most likely murderer candidate, as per the rules of the game. After seeing Barf Bag's corpse, everyone thought he had pushed Dicey down the stairs, then fled to the lounge, saw her there, and killed her too before fetching the others. Bowling Ball even saw his scarf flutter as Envelope ran out of the cabin.

Of course, though, it wasn't him.

Barely three days in and five people were already gone.

Needless to say, this was starting to seriously take its toll on the current 'campers' - except Bottle, who seemed to have a bottomless well of joy and optimism, whatever the circumstances. On the opposite side of the coin, however, one of the more affected people was Marshmallow.

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It was the next day. Marshmallow lay in bed inside her cabin, blankets pulled up to her nose. Three images kept lingering in her head, no matter how hard she tried to dispel them. 3D's head snapping backwards from the force of Oodle's bullet; Dicey's broken body sprawled on the floor of the Arts and Crafts cabin; and Barf Bag leaking blood all over the couch in the lounge. The fact that bile kept intermittently rising into her throat and then back down again wasn't helping.

There was a knock on her door. "Come in," she called out weakly.

The door opened, and Marsh opened her eyes to see Bone stepping into the cabin. He was holding a tall glass with a thick, pink liquid

inside. "Hey, uh, Brain told me - well, not me specifically, he hates my guts, but I heard overheard him telling others - that you weren't really feeling well. And since TV, Flaggy, and Bottle just made smoothies for everyone, I wanted to bring you one."

Marshmallow's mood lifted considerably, and she swallowed back the latest rise of bile to answer. "Th- thanks. I don't think I can drink it right now, so just leave it on the dresser."

Bone nodded and complied, then sat down on the bed opposite from Marsh - Brain's bed. "How are you holding up?"

She turned her head just enough to be able to see him. "Why... why are you asking? I barely even know you... no offense."

"I'm just trying to be nice. I think we all need some tlc, especially in *this* game." Bone's expression suddenly shifted. Subtly, but even in her unwell state, Marshmallow noticed. When his gaze refocused on her, his eyes had a slightly redder tinge to them, and the next words he spoke sounded less meek and a little more confident. "It's also nice to talk to someone who doesn't hate me for once." His chuckling turned into a nervous giggling halfway through. "Eheheh..."

Marshmallow shifted around and sat up a little to face him better. *Interesting...* "This may be out of the blue, but are you *sure* you don't know why the kids at your school hate you?" she asked suddenly.

Bone jumped a bit, and Marsh saw a bead of sweat form on his forehead. "Y-yeah. Positive," he stammered.

"Alright..."

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"Hah! Hoo! Yes- oh nooooo! Curse you, Toad!"

"What are you doing in here?"

WL4 took a quick glance to his left to see Flower leaning on the lounge's doorframe before going back to his game. "Playing on this Wii, obviously."

"I can see that," Flower growled. "What I'm wondering is, why now? Why here? After... well... Barf Bag."

WL4 scoffed. "I'm not gonna let something like a little blood stop me from playing video games."

Flower glanced at the floor, despite all the blood from the previous day having already been cleaned up, and shook her head. "Anyway... what are you playing?"

"Wario Kart!" he answered gleefully. "Wanna join?"

"Wario-?" Flower stepped inside to get a better view of the television. "Wait. This is just Mario Kart!"

"I prefer to call it Wario Kart."

"Aight then Warioy, scoot over and hand me a controller." Flower cracked her knuckles and grinned. "Lemme show you the skills of a true *Mario* Kart player - middle school champion, three years in a row!"

WL4 grinned right back. "Finally! A worthy opponent. Our battle will be legendary!"

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Bowling Ball munched on the last of his sandwich as he and Suitcase exited the mess hall. "'is is really 'ood," he mumbled through a mouthful of bread, vegetables, and bacon.

"What?"

He swallowed and tried again. "I said, this is really good."

"Oh. Yeah, TV's a great cook," Suitcase agreed. "I haven't had a smoothie that delicious in forever."

BB nodded, and the two of them settled into a comfortable silence as they strolled down the main path that led to the cabins. Despite the whole 'summer camp' aesthetic, there wasn't actually a ton to do to pass time. A lot of the campers simply chatted with one another most

of the time.

Bowling Ball opened his mouth to say something to Suitcase, hesitated, then decided to say it anyway. "Hey, um, sorry if this ruins the mood, but about yesterday, right before... uh, Dicey. You were saying something about how Bottle... 'saved' you... and I was wondering if you wanted... to... talk about... it...?" He faltered as Suitcase stopped and stared at him with a blank look. "I-III m-mean, if you d-don't want to talk ab-about it, then that's ok! I mean, obviously, I-I don't want to force anything on-"

"No." Suitcase stopped him. She sighed and kneaded her forehead, then slumped against a tree on the side of the path. "I should... probably talk about it. I haven't really told anyone relating to it, except Bottle, so... maybe it'll be good to get it off my chest again."

BB sat down next to her and waited patiently. Two minutes passed before she finally collected her thoughts and looked up. "I won't go into too many details, but I've been pretty... pretty de-" She took a deep breath. "I've been depressed for a while. Gosh, that feels weird to say out loud again. Anyway, I started out life alright, but then someone I thought was a friend... well, he turned out to be terrible. I started seeing things, and having those panic attacks, and more."

"Last year, when my class went to visit BFD High, I was at a really low point. I was honestly considering..." She gulped. "But then I came across Bottle and her 'team,' the one we told you about yesterday. According to her, one of them - Black Hole, I think his name was? He apparently noticed my 'symptoms' right away and sent Bottle to me to help. And she did. She's so bubbly and optimistic. She just has this... energy about her, you know?"

BB nodded. He knew exactly what she meant.

"She managed to convince me to tell her... everything, basically. She listened to every little tidbit, every detail, and then... when I finished, she also convinced me not... to... y-you know..."

BB nodded sadly. Unfortunately, he knew exactly what she meant, again.

Suitcase closed her eyes. "I got a lot better after that, and the panic attacks were much less frequent. I still think about everything she said constantly, and it's really nice to see her again. But with this whole situation, I- I..." Her face darkened. "It's b-becoming harder to continue."

"Hey," Bowling Ball said firmly. She glanced up at him again. "We'll make it through this, alright? Bottle's here, and I'm here, and a bunch of other people are here, and if you ever need to talk to one of us again, we'll listen."

Suitcase looked down at her feet once more. "I'll try... thank you."

"Anytime."

They stayed there quietly for a few minutes before Bone, who was walking back from Cabin 7, happened across them. "Oh! Bone, how's Marshmallow doing?" Bowling Ball asked.

He waved. "She seems to be doing okay enough. She says she's just recovering from all the sights of..." Bone swiped a finger across his neck. "But she thinks she'll be alright tomorrow."

"Good to hear!" Suitcase chirped. News of another friend getting better raised her mood somewhat.

Bone let them be and continued walking down the main pathway. Once they were out of earshot - he checked furtively to make sure nobody else was around - he whispered an angry message to himself. "Look, *please* don't just take control whenever you feel like it, like you did earlier! The others are going to notice!"

His pink eyes took on a crimson sheen. "I don't have the slightest clue what you're talking about."

"Just q-quit it, alright? I think Marshmallow already suspects me, thanks to you!"

"Hey, I'm just trying to help you be more confident!"

Bone hissed - a rare occurrence. "You-"

"Who are you talking to?"

Bone nearly leapt out of his skin. Flaggy was standing only a few feet away, staring at him weirdly. "Does your phone have service or something?" she asked. "Because we could really use that-"

"No, no! Sadly," Bone interrupted her. "I was juuuussst... taaalking to myself. Yeah, heheh..."

Flaggy held his gaze for a moment longer, then shrugged and walked past him. "Everyone has different coping mechanisms, I guess."

**----------**

With a grunt, Cheesy heaved the canoe with Box inside into the water. The smaller boy had a slightly-too-large life jacket strapped to his chest, and he was clutching an oar.

Cheesy hopped in the boat, making it wobble dangerously. Box didn't flinch. "Well, Boxy boy? You ready?"

The younger boy slowly nodded affirmation.

"Great! Then let's get rowin'!" Cheesy pushed against the dock, causing their canoe to start gliding out into the lake, and began to row. After a couple minutes, they were quite a ways away from the dock. Cheesy decided it was a good time to let themselves glide and stashed his oar inside the canoe. Box struggled with his, but managed to get it in before dropping it into the water.

The older, yellow-haired boy sighed deeply and stretched, settling into what was almost a lying down position. "Now *this* is nice. You know, Box, a lot of people just don't seem to appreciate the little things in life. Things like being in a peaceful lake on a warm day... or the company of a friend... or puns." Cheesy wiggled his eyebrows. "Others seem to have an especially hard time appreciating that last one."

"But what people *really* don't understand about those little things is how important they are in times like these. Even though our situation is a bit... extreme and unusual - to put it lightly - they always underestimate the power of laughter. I mean, come on! It wouldn't

*kill* them to crack a joke every now and then!"

He let out a halfhearted chuckle at this and slapped his knee; more of a habit than anything. "At least Bottle stays optimistic a lot." Cheesy lifted his head to look at Box, who looked unfocused but somehow appeared to be paying attention at the same time. "My point being, thanks for agreeing to come relax out here with me. It's always nice to encounter someone else who stops and smells the roses every now and then."

Box slowly refocused his gaze on Cheesy and, for the first time, gave a small smile. Since the day they all arrived at the camp, the only expressions he had shown before were either neutral ones or slight frowns.  Cheesy grinned as well. "You know, you remind me of my little brother."

He chose not to elaborate and instead, closed his eyes and let himself relax until he fell asleep.

# I'll pass

Conditioner stretched under her blankets, confused on where she was for a moment before remembering Oodle. She groaned and got out of bed, rubbing her eyes to clear the disgusting gunk that formed in the night. There wasn't too much sunlight shining into her cabin as it was surrounded by trees, but the few rays that made it in illuminated any dust in the air and made it almost sparkle. The bed across from her was empty - Box must have already gotten up, she surmised. She had no idea what time it was, though.

The front door creaked open and Conditioner glanced up. "Box?" she wondered aloud. The wooden door opened fully, and she concluded that it was *not* Box. "Oh. Hello. What are you-"

---

"...and *that* is how I single-handedly won a game of dodgeball!" Cheesy finished his story with a flourish of his hands. He was sitting at a table with Flaggy, Brain, and Bottle in the mess hall. Several others were there as well, eating something or talking with someone else.

Brain clapped politely. "Impressive."

"I loved that story!" Bottle cheered.

Suitcase, who was passing by with a plate of toast, stopped at their table. "Hang on. That's not true, Cheesy - I was there! It was Microphone who won that for us."

"Oh..." Cheesy chuckled nervously. "Weeeell, I *may* have stretched the truth a little bit."

Brain rolled his eyes and muttered, "I don't have time for tall tales." He pushed back his chair and walked off.

Cheesy leaned closer to Flaggy and Bottle. "I may be a right-brainer, but that guy seems more like a left-brainer. Amirite?"

Bottle giggled, even though she didn't get the joke. Suitcase just shook her head and strolled away. "I thought the story was still pretty neat," Flaggy confided.

"If you liked that one, then you'll like this one! So I was on my way to jet flying class-" Cheesy got distracted as Box entered the mess hall and walked up to the trio. "Heyo, Box! How are-"

His heart stopped. Box's hands and torso were completely covered in blood, and one of his bare feet had left a trail of bloody footprints. Flaggy rubbed her eyes to make sure she was seeing correctly. "Shiiiiiiit," she sighed.

"Uh oh!" Bottle simply stated.

Cheesy blinked hard. His heart began to move again when he realized that Box was unharmed, but then it hit him that he was covered in someone *else's* blood. That realization almost knocked him out of his chair.

The others in the room had noticed and were coming over. Cheesy swallowed and spoke. "Uh, so... who's dead, Box?"

---

Bowling Ball needed some fresh air. He stepped outside of Cabin 2 and closed the door, muffling the sounds of mild arguing from inside. He brightened a little after seeing Marshmallow walking towards him from the pathway that led to the showers. Her hair looked damp. "Just got out of the shower when I heard talking. Is everything alright?" she asked.

"Hey, good to see that you're feeling better! But..." He sighed. "I'm afraid things have only gotten worse. Conditioner's dead."

Marsh gasped. "Oh no."

"Yeah. There's a lot of blood, so I recommend you stay out here."

"I... I think I'll be alright now to see... something a little gruesome." She scratched the back of her head. "The more you see these sorts of things, the more... desensitized you become, y'know?"

"...I guess." BB shrugged. "But if you think you'll be good, then let's head back in. I just needed... a quick breather." Marshmallow nodded in understanding and together, they opened the door and went inside.

The sounds of arguing had gotten louder in the minute they spent out there. Thirteen living bodies and one corpse tended to crowd a small cabin, but there was still a small space in the middle where the body was. Conditioner lay on the ground, blood leaking out of two stab wounds on her torso. It pooled around her, staining the shoes of the three boys who stood over her body - Mac, Cheesy, and Box. The other ten kids just watched as Mac and Cheesy argued.

"It *has* to be him!"

"Have you even *met* Box? He wouldn't hurt a fly!"

"And have *you* even *seen* the blood all over him?"

"This is his cabin as much as it was Conditioner's - he was probably just investigating the body!"

"Guys, guys, come *on!"* Flaggy stepped between the boys before things could get physical, pushing them both back. "I'm sure there's a perfectly logical explanation for all this. Fighting isn't going to solve anything."

WL4 spoke up. "Why don't we just ask Box?"

"Box can't speak, stupid," Flower huffed.

"Oh yeah."

"But he can still *communicate,"* TV pointed out.

"You're right!" Cheesy knelt down a little so that he was more on Box's level. "Do you have a suspect?"

Box nodded. After a tense moment, he pointed directly at Mac.

Flaggy slapped her forehead. "Never mind. That probably only made it worse."

Mac crossed his arms, sufficiently annoyed. "Look. If you're just pointing at me because I accused you, then stop wasting our time. Let's just shoot this kid, he's obviously guilty."

"No!!" Cheesy protested, his voice cracking.

"I think this guy's got a point," Bone agreed, very uncharacteristically. "I hate it, but it's the best shot we have right now."

Several people groaned and Cheesy glared at him, visibly on the verge of tears. "Even *I* think that pun was distasteful!"

"I made a pun? Oh, I suppose I did. Whoops."

Someone cleared their throat. All thirteen campers swiveled their heads around to see Oodle leaning against the cabin's door frame. He spun the revolver in his hands. "Well, I think it's about time to choose. Since it's unclear on where everyone stands right now, let's do a show of hands. All in favor of *not* shooting Box?"

Cheesy's hand flew into the air before Oodle even finished his sentence. Box's was next, followed by Bowling Ball, Suitcase, and TV. Bottle waved both her arms around in the air like a lunatic.

"Alright, that's six of you. Now, all in favor of shooting Box?"

Bone and Mac raised their hands first, With Flower, WL4, and almost reluctantly, Marshmallow afterwards. Brain considered it for a moment, then shrugged and raised his hand too. "It seems only logical," he surmised.

Oodle counted them, then counted again. "The count's tied at six to six. Flaggy, you're the deciding vote."

Flaggy froze, thirteen pairs of eyes suddenly on her. "W-what? I... I don't-"

"THE PASS!" Suitcase blurted out suddenly. Everyone's eyes shifted to her, and she gulped nervously. "Er, what about the pass? Couldn't we use that?"

Cheesy's eyes widened. "Yes! We should ABSOLUTELY use the pass!"

"I agree! We don't have enough information here to choose someone!" Bottle said, still somehow seeming cheerful. Several others nodded their heads as well.

"Alright," Oodle relented. "One more show of hands for those who want to use the pass. But remember, once it's gone, you'll all *have* to condemn someone from now on whenever there's a victim."

Once again, Cheesy and Box's hands were the first to go up. The other four who voted to save Box before also raised their hands, but this time, they were joined by WL4 and Marshmallow. "Looks like that's a majority," Oodle said, with the hint of a relieved smile on his face. "I'll leave you all to your own devices for now." With that, he vanished once more.

Cheesy choked out a sob of relief and hugged Box tightly, but briefly, before he let go and briskly led the younger kid out of the cabin. Bottle sprinted after him, and people began to file out of the door one by one. Flaggy was the last to go.

But right before exiting completely, she paused. *There must be a reason Box thought it was Mac,* she thought to herself. *Maybe he really* did *investigate the body?*

Now curious, Flaggy stepped back inside and knelt down next to Conditioner's body. She mentally prepared herself and gently lifted Conditioner's corpse by her torso, grimacing the whole time. Underneath was just blood- but wait. A pair of indents were almost unnoticeable underneath the gory puddle.

Flaggy reluctantly wiped away the bodily fluid and sure enough, there were two thin, blood-filled slits in the wooden floorboards. She checked the body and they lined up with the holes in Conditioner's chest. *Huh. How do those have anything to do with Mac?*

The green-haired girl could only stomach inspecting the body for another short moment before letting it drop and standing up. *Now I've got to wash all this sticky blood off my hands...*

# Too strong

Flaggy stared at her toast dismally, not having taken a single bite yet. The game was really starting to get to her, as she didn't feel hungry in the slightest. What was she thinking, putting *strawberry* jelly on her breakfast?

"You ok?" Bone asked from next to her. She hadn't even noticed him sit down.

She shrugged. "I don't know. Would anyone be ok in a 'game' like this?"

"Bottle seems to be."

"Sure, but Bottle's probably the most wholesome being to ever exist in this universe, so she's a special case."

"I guess." He paused for a moment. "Are you going to eat that?"

Flaggy finally tore her eyes away from her plate and stared at him. The demeanor of his voice had changed subtly during that last sentence - so subtly, in fact, that Flaggy wouldn't have noticed if she hadn't done so already twice previously. "Uhhhh... sure... go ahead."

"Thanks." He slid the plate over to himself and began to munch. Flaggy watched him carefully, and realized that his eyes were a darker shade of pink than she last remembered. She opened her mouth to ask a question-

*"MARBLE?!"*

"Huh?" Flaggy and Bone whirled around just in time to witness none other than Marble storm into the mess hall. The short girl had twigs and leaves sticking out of her messy red hair, and her t-shirt had a small hole in it just above her waistline. Her hands, elbows, and

knees were covered in dirt. An empty water bottle dangled from one hand.

Bone's mouth dropped open in astonishment, and a piece of toast fell out. Brain, who was the one who shouted Marble's name a moment ago, regained his composure. "Where the hell have *you* been?"

"Zip it," she snapped. She ignored Flaggy, Bone, Bowling Ball, WL4, and Marshmallow, and walked into the kitchen. They heard a shout of surprise from TV (who was already in there) and Marble walked out a moment later with a full water bottle and a banana in her hands.

She made it most of the way to the door without any more interference, but Brain grabbed her wrist as she passed by him. "Marble," he said forcefully. "Six people are *dead.* We need to know where you've BEEN."

Marble seemed to consider something for a short moment before promptly chomping down on Brain's wrist. "YOUCH!!" he yelped, instantly letting go of her. She retracted her teeth at the same time, leaving a pattern of normal bite marks in his arm plus one tiny hole, which began to leak blood. A single drop of the red liquid dripped from Marble's one sharp tooth, which none of the others had ever really noticed until now. "Next time you touch me, I'll do something much worse," she spoke, her tone cold.

Brain nursed his wrist as Marble sauntered out the front door. "Uh... who's cabin was she in again?" Bowling Ball asked to nobody in particular. "We should let them know that Marble's back before-"

A piercing scream cut through the air. *"GHOST!"* they could hear Suitcase yelling from outside.

"Yeah, I should probably-" BB got up from his chair and hurried out the main exit. Brain left as well, but from the side door, still holding his limp wrist tenderly.

TV chose that moment to stick his head into the room from the kitchen. "What in the world just happened?"

"Your guess is as good as mine," answered Bone.

WL4 chuckled. "Now that *she's* back from wherever, I think things here are about to get a lot more interesting.

From her seat next to him, Marshmallow looked at WL4 strangely. "You think things here haven't been interesting enough already?"

"Oh, they have. But Marble's known in our school for being cunning and really observant. She manipulates other kids to do things like her homework or get revenge on others all the time. Either she's going to crack this game wide open, or she's the killer and we're all doomed."

"Hmm." Marshmallow stared at the door Marble disappeared through earlier. "Say what you want, but I'm not going to trust her unless we get concrete evidence that she's on our side."

---

Cheesy rubbed the sleep out of his eyes as the Arts and Crafts cabin grew closer. Standing in the fork in the road that led to it was Bottle, humming to herself and dancing to some music only she could hear. She noticed Cheesy and stopped. "Good morning!"

"'morning," he grunted back.

Bottle studied his face. "You look like you didn't get much sleep."

He snorted. "Thanks for pointing out the obvious, airhead."

Bottle's expression turned scarily neutral. Cheesy sighed. "Sorry, that... that was really rude. I'm just tired cause of nightmares."

"Aw." The white-haired gal smiled again, but this time it was a sad smile. "If you ever need to unload, I'm always all ears!"

"Thanks, but no thanks." This time, it was Cheesy's turn to study Bottle's face. "I do have a question for you, though. Staying optimistic all the time is hard, and I speak from experience. Yet, I don't think I've seen you make a single sad expression since we met, even when we were discussing death. How do you do it?"

Bottle's face twitched. "Just because I'm constantly smiling doesn't mean I'm always happy."

Cheesy stared at her, but her smile didn't shift again. He shook his head. "Well, I'm sure we can both discuss our problems to each other at great length some other time. Do you know where Box is? I've been looking for him."

"Yeah, actually!" She pointed down the path that went right to the Arts and Crafts cabin. "He's in there! But he asked me to keep you out until he finishes whatever he's working on."

"'Asked' you?"

"He wrote it on some paper and gave it to me a while ago."

"Oh. Do you know what he's working on?"

"Not a clue! But he's probably almost finished. I think it's ok to go in!"

"Great." Cheesy stepped aside and strode past Bottle, who turned on her heels and followed him. They entered the A&C cabin together. "Booooox!" Bottle sang. "Cheesy's here! What are..."

Her voice petered out. Box was slumped over one of the tables with an arrow sticking out of his back. His eyes were open wide, revealing them to be glassy and lifeless. Blood leaked out of his mouth and onto a sheet of paper on the table.

"Oh," Bottle whispered. For the first time since the girl had arrived at the faux summer camp, her smile disintegrated completely and morphed into an expression of sorrow. "Oh, n-no..."

She glanced over at Cheesy - he had essentially become a statue. The boy's body was completely frozen, his eyes locked on the sight of Box's corpse. There was no expression on his face. Bottle almost thought he had even stopped breathing until she saw the slight in-and-out of his chest.

A soft gasp came from behind her. She looked to see Suitcase standing in the entryway, hands covering her mouth. "Can you go get the others?" Bottle whispered quietly to her.

Suitcase nodded, her eyes beginning to water. She turned and ran out of the building.

---

The mood in the building was desolate. All the campers but Marble were there, silently trying to figure out if what was happening was real. Who would kill a 12-year old kid? It had to be some kind of sick, twisted joke, right?

Ha. If only.

The only sound that could be heard was Bottle whispering to Cheesy, trying to get him to respond to something. To anything. But he was essentially comatose. His eyes were glassy and unfocused, staring into the distance.

"So." Brain finally broke the relative silence, making everyone jump a little. "Are we going to figure this out, or what?"

Looking at him weirdly, TV replied, "Maybe we should, but there's no need to make it sound so heartless."

"Like you'd know anything about heart."

TV tensed. He looked nervous. "What's *that* supposed to mean?"

"You know exactly what I-"

"Hey." Mac interrupted them. "Let's stick to the point. Bottle, you were around here for some time. Did you see anything suspicious at all?"

The girl looked away from Cheesy for a moment and shook her head sadly. "No. Nothing."

"Doesn't surprise me," Flower muttered. "Bottle barely notices anything of importance."

Bottle looked directly into Flower's face. "Hey. I may be goofy, but I'm not deaf. I've heard every single bad statement that you and the other iancers have thrown at me over the years." Despite this passive-

aggressive retort, however, there wasn't a hint of malice in her voice.

Flower opened her mouth to respond, then closed it again, averting her shame-filled gaze. Bottle returned her attention to Cheesy.

Someone else spoke up. "I think it's pretty obvious who the killer is," stated WL4. "Mac, care to fess up?"

Mac's head whirled around in confusion. "Wha?"

"Box was killed with a bow and arrow." WL4 gestured to the body. "You're the only one here strong enough to pull back one of the bows from the archery range."

"What do you mean?" Bowling Ball questioned.

WL4 cleared his throat. "Allow me to elaborate. Ahem. On-"

"Did you just clear your throat twice?"

"Shut up. On our first day here, when we all went exploring, me, Brain, and Mac went to the archery range. I tried shooting an arrow at one of the targets, but the bow was super strong! I could barely pull the string back halfway. But Mac did it really easily, and even managed to hit one of the targets."

"I remember that," Brain commented.

Mac felt the weight of several pairs of eyes look directly at him. "Is this true?" Suitcase asked meekly.

"Y-yes," he stammered, "but I'm sure Warioy-"

"Don't call me Warioy. Only friends get to do that."

"-just isn't very strong. Anyone could pull back that bow!"

Flower raised a finger. "No, hang on. I've been to the archery range myself at some point and tried to shoot the bow as well, but it really IS strong. I think it's reinforced or something."

"Oh!" Flaggy interjected. "I have something to add. I, uh... yesterday,

after we spared Box, I-"

Bowling Ball slapped his forehead. "God damn it. We spared Box, and now... he's dead. The pass was used for nothing..."

A new wave of despair washed over everyone as this realization came to light. "A-anyhow," Flaggy stuttered, trying not to just lie down and give up, "after everyone left the cabin yesterday, I... well, inspected Conditioner's body."

"Gross!"

"Not like that, WL4!" Flaggy's face reddened. "I found two slits in the floor underneath that matched up with the holes in her torso. Let's say Conditioner was shot by a bow and arrow as well, twice." She pointed at Box, and the weapon stuck there. "Box's arrow went right through him to the other side. Who's to say that the same thing didn't happen with Conditioner, and those holes in the floor are arrow holes?"

Brain snapped his fingers. "That would also explain two more things. Perhaps Box was covered in her blood yesterday because he *also* investigated and saw those holes, and he accused Mac because he came to the same conclusion you did. And when he accused Mac..."

"...Mac knew that he had to kill him to shut him up," TV finished.

"Precisely."

"But how did Box know about Mac's strength?" Suitcase queried.

WL4 shrugged. "I mentioned it to Cheesy some time ago, I think. Maybe he told Box."

Everyone in the room (minus Cheesy and Bottle) looked at Mac, who was sweating profusely. "O-ok, maybe I d-did t-try to mostly hide my s-strength," he responded hesitatingly. "But when I learned th-that this would be a sick *murder mystery,* I-I didn't want to seem suspicious! I knew my s-strength would make me a target!"

"Hate to break this to you, but that only made you seem even *more* suspicious," Bone pointed out.

"I-I know! But-"

"You, uh, look pretty nervous," Bowling Ball noticed suddenly. "Unusually nervous."

"That's b-because you are all about to accuse me of MURDER!" Mac snapped. "What sane person *wouldn't* be nervous right now?"

Oodle shrugged. "He's got a point, you know." By this time, the campers were so used to the counselor appearing from thin air that nobody even flinched. "Now, I think it's safe to assume that you guys want Mac dead?"

Bone snorted. "That's a bloodthirsty way of putting it, but yes." Most of the others in the room nodded or murmured agreement.

"I don't know," Flower piped up thoughtfully. "Something's not sitting right with me. If Mac really *is* the killer, wouldn't he have been smart enough to, I don't know, hide the murder weapon?"

"Maybe he didn't have enough time to?" Marshmallow offered.

"No, that's weak. Box was in here for a few hours at least."

"I'm *NOT* the murderer!" Mac roared furiously, emotion raw in his voice.

Brain rolled his eyes. "I believe the answer to that is the simplest one - Mac has brawn, but no brains."

Mac whirled around to face Brain, fire in his eyes, but Oodle stepped in between them. "Woah there, boys, let's not get into a hissy fit. Besides, the decision's already been made, so the outcome will be the same no matter what y'all say now. However... there *is* a slight change to the game."

The camp counselor pulled out a twelve-sided die. Each face had one of the alive campers' faces on it, except for Mac's. "My superiors made a new rule that instead of me shooting the accused, one of *you* now has to do it, chosen randomly by this here die."

As if the mood couldn't get any more sour. The fact that the device

which would choose one of them to kill was called a 'die' didn't help any.

Oodle tossed the dodecahedron onto the floor. Everyone watched as it rolled around, the clattering being deafening in the otherwise silent room. It finally settled down, and the head that ended face-up was...

# Too slow

*...the head that ended face-up was a girl with short brown hair and a darker brown headband. Suitcase.*

"Here ya go." Oodle conjured the gun from somewhere and tossed it at Suitcase, who flinched when it landed on the ground next to her. "I think you know what to do."

"Wh-what?" Suitcase stammered. She stared at the weapon of destruction at her feet. "I-I can't k-k-" She was so nervous, she couldn't even finish her sentence.

Oodle sighed. "Suitcase," he reminded softly, "if you don't shoot Mac, then I'll be forced to kill your family."

That shocked her into silence. Slowly, Suitcase bent down to pick up the revolver. She tried to aim it at Mac, her hands shaking violently. The boy pleaded at her with his eyes, tears visible. She began to tear up herself and closed her own eyes. "I... I-I-I'm sorry!!"

A deafening blast of noise filled the room as she pulled the trigger. Once the light had faded from everyone's eyes, Mac was sprawled on the ground, blood already pooling around his torso where the bullet had entered.

Suitcase dropped the gun and fled the building for the second time that day. Marshmallow and Bowling Ball ran after her. "Well?" Bone turned to Oodle. "Was it Mac?"

The man just shook his head sadly. WL4 visibly deflated from across the room. "But I was so sure..."

Flower looked at Mac's body. "What a waste."

For once, they had to agree with the mean-spirited girl.

---

Bowling Ball and Marshmallow found Suitcase huddled on the ground outside Cabin 5. She was curled up in the fetal position right in front of the door, tears silently leaking down her face. "...Suitcase?" Marshmallow asked nervously.

No response for a moment. Then... "I killed him," she said so softly that they almost didn't hear. There was no emotion in her voice. "I pointed a gun at him and shot him. I ended his life."

Bowling Ball shook his head. "Woah, hey-"

"I took him away from his family," she continued, not acknowledging him. "His friends. I put a hole in his chest. I killed him. I pointed a-"

Marshmallow slapped Suitcase, shocking both her and Bowling Ball into silence. "Get yourself together, girl!" Marsh shouted. Then, in a softer tone: "Look. Mac is dead, and there's no changing that. But you're not to blame here. You drew the short straw, but even if you hadn't, someone else would have. This is *Oodle's* fault, *not* yours. I don't want you beating yourself up for something where you had no choice in the matter."

Suitcase righted herself so that she was sitting upright. "But Bottle-" Her voice was beginning to crack, and she wiped a tear from her face. "Bottle *frowned* today. She NEVER frowns. Not once in the year that I've known her. She's indestructible. So if *she* shatters, even a little, then what's the point in-"

"NO. Do NOT finish that sentence." Bowling Ball wrapped his arms around Suitcase. "I know it probably seems hopeless right now, but there's ALWAYS reasons to keep going. You just have to find them. I'm sure Bottle will be back to her cheery self in no time. And you've got me and Marshy Marsh here to support you!"

"Yeah." Marshmallow sat down and patted Suitcase's back. She felt it would be a bit awkward to join the hug. "We're here, and we always will be. Murderer be damned. In fact, I can *guarantee* that I'll protect you both. Whoever it is, they're not getting past me. Capiche?"

Suitcase sniffled but said nothing, instead choosing to nod slowly. BB opened his mouth to say something else, but was interrupted by another voice. "Is the sobfest done yet?"

The trio looked up to see Marble leaning out of one of the cabin's windows. "Do you mind?" Marshmallow snapped, annoyed. "We're trying to comfort our friend here."

"And *I'm* trying to get some *sleep* here," Marble retorted. "Do you think you can all go be sappy somewhere else?" Before any of them could answer, she slammed the window shut.

"What a jerk," BB muttered.

Bottle took Cheesy back to their cabin and spent the rest of the day trying to get him to respond. She left only once to go get food and even considered trying to feed him, but decided against it in case he began to choke.

At some point around 7 pm (there was a clock in the mess hall), Bottle finished her food and finally decided to try something. She would have done it before if not for the fear that it would only make things worse.

She sat down next to Cheesy, who was sitting frozen on the edge of his bed, and very carefully pulled out a folded piece of paper from

her pocket. "Cheesy?" she asked, knowing he wouldn't react. "I have the thing that Box was making for you. A note. I'm going to read it, if that's ok with you."

No response.

Bottle glanced down and unfolded the paper, which she had swiped from the A&C cabin earlier before Suitcase brought the others over. It had a few small bloodstains on it, but she'd done her best to wipe them off and translate what was lost. She took a deep breath and began to read.

*"Dear friend, I am writing this to you because I cannot speak, and also because my signing is too slow. So I will try to write this out as well as I can.*

*"My family has not been the best to me. Without going into too much detail, my parents think I am 'broken' because I cannot speak. I wish I was exaggerating when I say they treat me like garbage, but I am not. Because of this, I became very introverted early on and have very few friends. But I am pretty sure they only let me hang out with them because they pity me. None of them have even bothered to learn sign language.*

*"The school staff is not much better. The teachers there are not mean, exactly, but they do not try to help me when I am struggling, and that is cruelty in its own way. The principal, however, hates me just as much as my parents do, and only amplifies their views on me being 'broken.' If I am being honest, I was recently starting to believe that myself."*

Cheesy's finger twitched. Bottle didn't notice.

*"But over these past few days, I have felt more at home than ever before, despite the situation we are in. Many of the kids here have treated me with kindness and made me feel like an equal. You in particular. Even though I may not show much emotion, I do actually like your puns a lot. And that canoe ride two days ago was really nice.*

*"So I wanted to say thank you. For being nice to me, when you did not have to. And especially for defending me yesterday. I did not kill Conditioner, or Barf Bag, or Dicey, or Fireball, and I hope the others come to realize that soon. Above all, I am very happy and proud and honored*

*that I remind you of your little brother, like you said in the canoe."*

Cheesy's eyes began to refocus.

*"Before I finish this letter, I want to ask one thing of you. I understand if you cannot do it, however. When this 'game' is over, please come find me and take me away from my parents. I do not wish to live with them anymore. I remember from the first day here when you said you were from the high school in our town, Inanimate Academy, so it should not be too hard to find me. My address is..."*

Bottle hesitated. The street name and house number were blotted out by blood, so she forced herself to simply move onto the next line. *"Come over exactly 24 hours after we are freed from this place. Go to the back door and tell me your address. I will pack up what I need that night while my parents are sleeping and leave. It will be easier than if you try to explain anything to them yourself, so it is probably better if you do not meet them at all. That being said, I hope your own parents will understand if you explain the situation to them. If they are decent people, then they should understand.*

*"I have read this letter over twice, and I believe I have written everything I want to and need to say. Again, I will understand if you are not able to come help me. But if you can, I will be waiting at my back door for 15 minutes every 24 hours once we get out of this 'murder mystery.' I hope to see you there."*

Bottle paused to sniff and wipe away a tear. She couldn't remember the last time she'd cried in front of someone else. *"Love always, B-"* She was cut off there as Cheesy tackle-hugged her out of nowhere, football style. He buried his head into her shoulder and began to sob fiercely. "Hey, it's okay," Bottle soothed, setting down the note and returning the embrace. "It'll be okay."

"I-I- I had-" Cheesy began, but Bottle shushed him. "N-no, I w-want to say t-this," he tried again between sobs. "I-I had a little b-brother, named... M-Mozzarella. About B-B-B-Box's age. H-he was often q-quiet, j-just like Box, but th-that was j-just because he liked t-to be quiet. L-" Cheesy paused to gulp. "Last y-year, Mozz... he- he went- a car was-"

He wailed and sobbed even harder than before, squeezing Bottle so tight she thought her bones would shatter. (And her heart.) She simply hugged him back again. "It's alright. I know what it's like to lose people close to you."

Cheesy sniffed. His sobs slowly lessened over the next few minutes. "Thank you," he finally said. "Thank you, thank you, thank you."

Neither of them said another word for the rest of the night.

**rip Box :( his death was not fun to write**

**If anyone noticed, Box's style of writing in his letter is based after Charlie from *The Perks of Being a Wallflower,* which I read for school at the time I wrote this chapter**

**(is it bad that I imagined Ace Attorney music playing in the background when they were discussing the murder from the last chapter even though they were completely wrong lmao)**

# Not what he seems

Noon of the next day. Marshmallow, Marble, Flower, Flaggy, and WL4 were all waiting in the mess hall for TV to arrive and make lunch, just like he had been making most of the meals since they arrived at the camp. *(A/N: I'm getting really tired of starting these chapters in the mess hall, but bear with me here.)* The mood was quite subdued. Not only because of all the deaths, particularly the most recent victim, but because Marble still refused to tell anyone what she was doing in the woods, and it was making the others uneasy. Brain was avoiding Marble altogether.

It also didn't help that Oodle was sitting in the building with them.

Flower glanced at the green-themed man warily. "Why are you here again?"

"Cause I wanna experience TV's cooking." He put his hands behind his head and leaned back against the table. "Besides, I wanna actually hang out with you guys! Instead of just, well, you know-"

"Forcing us to be killed off one by one? Yes, we're fully aware of that part."

He winced. From another table nearby, Marble spoke up. "If you actually bothered to pay any attention around here, Oodle has clearly shown that he wants to be here about as much as we do. He may be the 'counselor,' but I'm reasonably sure that he's being forced into this by his 'higher-ups.'"

"Why are you defending him?" Flower growled. Marbled opened her mouth to answer, then snapped it back shut again.

"Is what Marble said true?" Flaggy questioned Oodle. He looked like he would respond, but didn't get the chance to before TV strolled into the mess hall. "Hey, it's the master chef himself!" Oodle said

cheerfully, obviously trying to improve the mood.

TV waved at them. "Sorry, everyone, but I don't really feel up to cooking today. I hope that's alright."

Marble rolled her eyes. "Oh, joy."

"Of course it's alright!" Marshmallow smiled a nervous smile. "It's understandable. I'm... still struggling to deal with this whole situation myself." She gestured to Oodle and said sarcastically, "Thanks for that, by the way."

"Hey!"

"I'll go try making something myself. I have a bit of cooking experience." Marsh hopped off her chair and walked into the kitchen.

TV slid into the empty chair next to Flaggy. He glanced around the room, seeing Flower and WL4 sitting together at a table, with Oodle and Marble nearby but at separate tables. "How are you holding up?" he asked Flaggy.

"Hm? Oh... hard to say." In reality, Flaggy was feeling pretty depressed, but she didn't want to show that. "What about you?" she asked in return, changing the topic.

He stared at a spot on the table. "About the same. I feel sad, of course. But I must admit, it's been a while since I've last experienced seriously strong emotions."

Flaggy raised an eyebrow, intrigued. "May I ask why?"

He bit his bottom lip. "No thank you. I'd rather not-"

Suddenly, his form blurred. TV's speed was so astoundingly fast, Flaggy didn't even register that his right limb had moved until she felt his fingers around her neck. She gagged as he began to squeeze the life out of her.

From across the room, Flower's mouth dropped open. "The *fuck?!* TV, what are you-!!"

"I- I'm not doing this!" the boy yelled back, distressed. "I can't control my right arm!"

Marble shot up from her seat and lunged for TV, grabbing his limb to pull him off Flaggy. He was strong. "Don't just- stand there!" she grunted at the others. "Help- me!"

Flower and WL4 shook off their shock and ran over to help, both of them grappling TV's right arm. But he simply would not let go. "OODLE, DO SOMETHING!" Flower shrieked.

Oodle shrugged. "I... I can't. I'm not allowed to interfere with this sort of thing."

Flower let loose a long stream of profanities. TV tried to pry his own fingers away with his left arm, which he still had control over, but to no avail. Flaggy desperately, uselessly, clawed at TV's fingers too, air supply gone and vision beginning to blacken.

Marshmallow poked her head out of the kitchen doorway. "What's going- what the *hell?!"*

"Help!" TV cried. His voice cracked with despair. "I'm trying to stop myself, but my arm won't respond!"

Things were worsening for Flaggy, but she saw Marsh sprint over and grab his hand. She somehow managed to wiggle her fingers under TV's pointer and middle and began to pull away with all the strength she had. Sure enough, those two fingers were pulled off, and a tiny sliver of air managed to flow down Flaggy's throat. She coughed in relief, but it wasn't nearly enough.

"Get the other fingers!" Marshmallow said. The others grabbed TV's three remaining fingers on the left hand and did their best to pull away the hand of doom. They succeeded.

Flaggy dropped to the ground and sucked in as much air as she could, gently holding her sore neck with one hand. But at the same time, the hand managed to break free and latched onto another target - Marshmallow. Her eyes bulged in surprise as TV started to choke her instead. "Sh-i-i-t!" she managed to squeak out.

The other campers latched onto the fingers again. "Get a knife!" TV ordered them.

"What??" WL4 protested.

"Get a big kitchen knife and c-cut my arm off!" His voice cracked again partway through the sentence, but they got the message. Marble's face hardened and she ran into the kitchen. Meanwhile, Flaggy was recovering on the ground, but Marshmallow's face was turning blue. Flower, WL4 and TV struggled but weren't able to do anything this time.

"Stand back!" Marble cried. Flower and WL4 leapt away as Marble dashed out of the kitchen, wielding the biggest meat cleaver they had ever seen. Reaching TV's right side, she raised it and slashed downwards without hesitation, as hard as she could.

*Shink.* Everyone knew they would take that sound to their grave. TV cried out in pain as the blade severed his arm at the elbow, neatly slicing it in half. The moment the cut was complete, the bloodthirsty fingers went slack and let go of Marshmallow. She collapsed to the ground and gasped for oxygen next to Flaggy. Marble dropped the knife and kicked it away as TV stumbled backwards, bumping into a table and almost joining the two girls on the floor.

A full minute of absolutely nothing followed, the silence only being filled by the rapid but decreasingly slower intake of air from the victims. Nobody wanted to look at TV or his severed limb.

Flower finally looked up. "Alright. *Someone's* got some serious explaining to do," she growled.

"Yeah!" WL4 agreed. He turned to TV, who was tenderly holding the stump of his right arm with his one remaining hand. "Teevee, why did yoooouuuuuuu..." WL4's sentence petered out as he actually *looked* at the boy and noticed something crucial. "...uuuuuuhhhhh, why... isn't there any blood?"

Marble looked at him as well and narrowed her eyes. "I... I literally cut off half of your arm. Even with you covering the wound, you *should* be bleeding profusely." She almost looked disappointed.

TV's face was an incomprehensible mish-mash of expressions. "I believe I... possibly know what may have happened here. But before I explain, I must warn you, I'm..." He hesitated. "...not quite what I seem."

"Just get... on with it," Marshmallow wheezed, struggling to rise to her feet.

Reluctantly, TV removed his hand from his stump so that everyone could see the wound. As he was always wearing a t-shirt, his sleeves didn't reach down to his elbow, so the inner mechanisms of his arm were exposed for all to see. Wires, metal structuring, a minuscule motor, other electronics, and more.

"What?" Flower stumbled backwards and tripped over a chair. "The fuck?!"

Marshmallow blanched. "You're... a *robot?"*

"Cool!" exclaimed WL4.

"Huh," Oodle commented from the back of the room. They had forgotten he was there at all. Flaggy would have gasped in surprise if she wasn't already still gasping for air, and Marshmallow fell right back down to the ground, startled.

Marble smiled slyly. "Well, this is a plot twist and a half. I wonder what the readers think."

"To answer Marble's query, I'm not *exactly* a robot. For lack of a better term, I'm more of what you would call a cyborg," TV began to explain. He opened his mouth to continue, closed it, then repeated the action. "I, er, I'm about to break a lot of rules by telling you all this." The boyborg continued to elaborate on how he was randomly selected and offered to be part of a test by some shady government who wanted to experiment with AI and prosthetic parts. He'd accepted, and after three days of intense surgery and stress, they had transformed nearly the entire right side of his body into a robot half (except for his brain). It was far stronger than his human left side, and there were many new things he was able to do with it.

When he finished, the others were silent for a moment as they contemplated this very interesting turn of events. TV took the opportunity to turn towards Flaggy on the floor. He reached out with his one remaining hand, extending it as an offer to help her up. "I hope you're not-"

Flaggy jerked away from him and scooted across the floor backwards, still gently holding her neck with one hand. Her eyes were wide and wild and filled with fear.

He retracted his hand. "Flaggy, I-" But he never got the chance to finish as the girl scrambled to her feet and fled from the mess hall. TV's heart broke as he realized that she, someone who had become a close friend in the last few days, was now terrified of him due to events not in his control. But he still felt like he was responsible, like he had broken her trust.

He was starting to wish that the small implants in his brain could dull his emotions even more than they already did, because he was wracked with mental pain.

# Howdunnit

Flaggy rushed out the door of the mess hall, tears leaking from her eyes. Almost immediately, she ran right into Bottle and Cheesy, who were walking down the path which led from the cabins. "Woah! Slow down, Flaggy!" Bottle said. "What's wrong?"

Flaggy didn't respond, choosing instead to push past them and continue sprinting away. They glanced at each other, concern on their faces. "Should we go after her?" Cheesy wondered aloud.

Bottle looked back. "I think Suitcase and Bowling Ball are still in their cabins. They should be able to help cheer her up!"

"Alright, I suppose..."

They continued forwards and entered the mess hall. Inside was quite the scene. Marshmallow sat on the floor, tenderly rubbing her neck. TV's arm was next to her - nobody had bothered to touch it - and TV himself was dejectedly slumped on a chair. WL4 and Flower were glancing between the two of them, while Marble sat at a different table, trying not to look at the cleaver lying on the ground near her.

Cheesy and Bottle froze when they saw all this. "...what the hell happened *here?"*

"You missed a lot," WL4 chuckled in their direction. "Basically, TV's a cyborg, and his robot arm went crazy and tried to strangle Flaggy, then Marshmallow, and then Marble had to cut it off with a knife."

Cheesy gasped. "A cyborg? That's so... COOL! Well, uh, aside from the attempted murders."

"You seem to be in a much better mood," Flower remarked.

"Yup! All thanks to the Bottle Therapy Hour, I'm..." He hesitated.

"Well, not good as new, per se... but as good as I'll ever be. I think."

Bottle giggled. "Thanks! I did my best."

"Hate to break up this wonderful bonding moment, but we should really try to figure out why TV's arm went haywi-" Marble stopped in the middle of her sentence as a thought entered her brain.

TV nodded glumly. "Marble's right. However, the only explanation I can think of is that I was hacked."

Flower looked at him weirdly. "Hacked? With what? The only electronics around here are the game consoles in the lounge, and I'm pretty sure it's impossible to hack anything with-"

"My laptop," Marble growled.

The others turned to look at her, perplexed. "Your... what?" WL4 questioned suspiciously.

The red-haired girl glanced around the room surreptitiously before answering. "Listen up, because I'm only explaining this once. The reason I disappeared for a few days was to look for Oodle's cabin in the woods. Remember how he accidentally put it on our maps at the start of this twisted game? Well, I found it. And I found him. And he actually told me several extremely useful things, which is much more than the rest of you have done so far."

She took a breath. "I know I don't have the best reputation, and you probably don't trust me-" She aimed that last statement at WL4. "-but you need to do so now. Oodle is being forced to do this game, just like we are. He doesn't want to host it, but the mysterious 'higher-ups' have put him under the same threat we're under; if he doesn't cooperate, they'll kill his family."

Marble took another deep inhale in the silence. "I should mention that he told me all this through writing, because he also said that his superiors can hear whatever he hears at all times during this game." Everyone else in the room suddenly realized that at some point, Oodle had vanished from the mess hall. Maybe he knew the conversation was coming and absconded from the scene to make sure

he couldn't overhear anything.

"But there's more." Marble grabbed their attentions again. "He gave me a laptop of his, to... I'm not exactly sure. He said he couldn't access the internet, either, but that maybe one of us had good enough hacking skills that we could use the laptop to push past whatever wireless barrier the higher-ups have constructed, and possibly send a signal to the outside world."

"I hid it in my cabin yesterday. But when I woke up this morning, it was gone. Stolen." By this point, her voice was icy. "I didn't even have a proper chance to look through the programs on there. For all I know, there was one that allowed the shithead murderer to hack into TV's arm or whatever."

TV winced. "I knew I should have disabled my Bluetooth brain implant."

"That's quite the story," WL4 commented. "You sure you're not making any of it up?"

Marble stared at him. "Do you think you're able to put our little feud from the past behind us for two seconds, or are you just so stupid that you don't care if we all die here in a horrible fashion?"

The boy's brow furrowed, but Marshmallow interrupted him by slamming her fist into the ground, making them all jump. They'd nearly forgotten she was there, she was so quiet. "I'm... getting REALLY tired... of you all arguing," she wheezed, still recovering from the attack on her life. "And tired of... this whole *shitty* game in... general."

Flower snorted. "You can say that again."

---

Flaggy didn't bother to go to her own cabin, instead just running straight down the path and into the first building she saw - Cabin 4. She burst through the doorway and leapt onto an empty cot inside, startling Bowling Ball and Suitcase, who were sitting next to each other on another bed. "Flaggy?" Suitcase asked, worry creeping into

her voice. "What are... are you ok?"

Flaggy mumbled a reply, muffled by the pillow in which she had buried her face into. Suitcase and BB exchanged glances. "We, uh, couldn't understand that," BB said.

No response this time.

"Ok, well, uhhhhh... if you... need a place to... rest? Cry? I guess you can stay here for a while. If you don't mind us talking."

She didn't respond again, which they took as confirmation. They continued their conversation, more quietly this time, occasionally glancing her way. Flaggy wanted to vent her frustration towards TV and the world in general by screaming into her pillow, but she figured that would only make her throat worse. She could barely talk as it was.

Eventually, despite everything, she managed to drift into a restless sleep.

# Game night

The next day.

By this time, everyone who wasn't in the mess hall the previous afternoon knew about what had happened, as well as where Marble had disappeared to, and her information about Oodle. Moods were mixed - there had been a murder attempt, sure. But on the other hand, nobody had actually died. By the same logic, they couldn't choose anyone to kill, and Oodle never returned with his revolver to execute an accused.

Brain stretched as he opened the door to Cabin 7, then noticed a sheet of colored paper on the ground. "What's this?" he asked himself, intrigued. He bent down to reach the paper, scanned it, then scoffed. "Please. I don't have time for this frivolous nonsense."

"Wha?" Marshmallow asked sleepily from her bed.

Brain tossed the sheet behind him without bothering to look back. "Read it for yourself," he called out over his shoulder as he walked off. Curious, Marsh slid out of her cot to do just as Brain had suggested. As she read, a smile slowly crept onto her face. "Huh. Looks like fun."

---

Aren't nightmares horrible? They're nothing but twisted scenarios thought up by your own mind, designed to terrify you for some unfathomable reason. Unfortunately, a nightmare is exactly what was plaguing Flaggy on the morning after the attempt on her life. I won't go into detail, but it wasn't pleasant.

She shot up from her bed in a cold sweat, screaming her head off. Bone, who had been silently observing her from across the room, screamed as well in surprise and fell over in automatic response,

which in turn only caused Flaggy to scream some more, as she hadn't known Bone was there.

It didn't last long; her screaming quickly descended into a raspy cough. All those hours spent asleep, healing her throat, instantly wasted by a single bad dream. "What are-" She winced, her voice raspy from the extensive strangulation damage done to her neck. She desperately needed water. "What are *you* doing here, staring at me creepily?"

Bone got up from the floor. Flaggy noticed that his eyes were the unusually darker pink-tinted versions, and he looked mildly annoyed. "Well, for starters, this is *my* cabin. If anything, *you're* the one intruding."

Flaggy glared at him, and he sighed, his eyes returning to normal. "S-sorry. That came out wrong. Bowling Ball told me what happened yesterday with TV, and we agreed that you could stay the night here, since you hadn't woken up by nightfall. I stayed this morning to make sure you were ok." Bone breathed out again and sat back down on his own cot. "You're probably lucky that everyone else is already awake and somewhere else. All that screaming would have made them think someone was being murdered."

"A bit late for that," Flaggy muttered.

Bone glanced at her neck warily. "Do you want an ice pack for that or something?"

She gently pressed against the side of her neck and winced a little. "Yeah, maybe. But I can get it from the infirmary myself, thanks."

"Ok... as long as you're feeling better." Bone stood up to go, but handed Flaggy a sheet of paper first. "There's this to look forward to tonight, if you want to come." He walked out the door as Flaggy looked down at the invitation in her hands.

Everyone* is invited to...
A GAME NIGHT!
We could all use some fun right now.
Come to the game lounge at 8pm tonight and we'll play console games until dawn!
I'll get snacks from the kitchen myself.
Let's all have a blast!
- Wario Land 4
*Everyone except for that stinky Marble.

---

"And now we need to add the flour."

"Why do we need Flower for this recipe? I thought she hated cooking."

"No, not the person. *Baking* flour!"

"..."

"Do you... know what baking flour is?"

"TV, the most complicated thing I've ever cooked was a pizza, and even then, it came out terribly."

TV sighed. "Well then, you have a lot to learn-"

The double doors to the kitchen swung open. TV and Suitcase tore their attention away from the mixing bowl to see Flaggy slowly stride into the kitchen. "Uh-" Suitcase stuttered. "I'll just- er, you know-" She pointed towards the other set of doors that led to the mess hall and rapidly walked through them, leaving Flaggy and TV alone.

An awkward silence permeated the room. Flaggy took a deep breath. "I'm sorry I ran away-"

"I'll sorry you almost died-" TV spoke at the same time. They paused, each waiting for the other to go first.

Flaggy finally broke the second wave of silence. "I'm... sorry that I fled yesterday. I was panicking, and not thinking straight-"

"No no, don't apologize for that!" TV interrupted quickly. "It was only rational, after what happened. If anyone should be apologizing, it was me. I should have been able to keep my arm from-"

Flaggy held out a hand, and he stopped. "You're... really a robot?"

They both glanced down at his stump of a right arm, now wrapped up with some bandages from the infirmary. "More of a cyborg, but yes," TV sighed. "Although now I'm regretting accepting that government's offer."

Another moment of silence. "...Bottle told me how you all think you were... hacked," Flaggy said. "How it wasn't really you in control."

TV nodded affirmation.

"In that case... I'm sorry again for running. I thought you had just tried to murder me, and I didn't go back to our cabin yesterday because I didn't trust you, but now that I know... I... suppose I forgive you?" She groaned. "No, that sounds really conceited, like I'm trying to guilt trip you into apologizing as well, even though you weren't in control. What I'm trying to say is... I think I trust you again."

TV breathed out, relieved. "Thank goodness. I was worried that I had destroyed your trust forever."

"Me, too."

---

The rest of the afternoon flew by faster than everyone thought, which was surprising, considering that there really wasn't much to do to pass the time at the camp. Before they knew it, the clock in the mess hall said 8pm, and it was time for the game night. Eight people, plus WL4, had come - only Marble, Brain, and Suitcase weren't attending.

"How's Suitcase holding up?" Bone whispered to Bowling Ball as they settled into the lounge.

"She's doing better," BB responded quietly. "I tried convincing her to come, that she would have fun here, but apparently she's not very into Nintendo games."

"I thought *everyone* was into Nintendo games."

Cheesy slid over to them. "I guess you could say-"

"Don't do it, Cheesy-"

"-that she-"

*"NO-"*

"-Nintendon't like them!" **knee slap**

From the other side of the couch, TV shook his head. "That's not even grammatically correct."

"Well, if you Nintendon't enjoy my puns, then the door's thataway!"

Marshmallow put her hands in her face. "I'm going to kill you."

Cheesy's smile dropped and he pointed at her accusingly. "Now, see, *that's* not a funny joke."

She remembered the general situation they were all in and clammed up. "Er, sorry."

"OK!" WL4 spoke loudly, attracting everyone else's attention. "I think the Wii, Xbox, and PlayStation are all set up. We should be good to go!"

Flower grunted as she pulled out a large box filled with controllers of various shapes and sizes. "How the hell are we supposed to figure out which controller goes to which console?"

"Look at the logos, dummy."

"Oh."

"Anyway, what game should we play first WARIO KART LET'S PLAY WARIO KART FIRST!!"

*"Wario...* Kart?" Flaggy wondered.

Flower huffed. "Just his way of saying Mario Kart. You know, Wario Land 4 and everything..."

"Ah. Well, I'm down for that!"

"Me too!" Bottle chimed in. The others also nodded agreement, except Cheesy, who wanted to play Lego Star Wars. He was sorely outvoted.

WL4 grinned. "Great! Then let's get this game night STARTED!"

Bowling Ball woke up very disoriented. He slowly rose to sitting position from the floor and glanced around at the unfamiliar people asleep around him. Then he remembered: the game night. The nine of them had played various games for hours, switching from console to console long into the dark. Until eventually, one by one, they'd all fallen asleep in the lounge, not bothering to head back to their cabins.

BB himself was sitting right next to the basket of controllers. Flaggy was sprawled on the floor, one hand having drifted under the couch. TV lay peacefully on the ground by the north door, a pillow half-under his head. A stretched-out Bottle was taking up most of the couch, with half of Cheesy occupying the remainder (his other half was dangling off onto the floor). Finally, Marshmallow snoozed in a ball nearby the west door. WL4, Flower, and Bone were nowhere to be seen.

The boy got up as quietly as he could, not wanting to disturb his fellow campers. Thankfully, Marsh wasn't close enough to stop him from opening the west door. Bowling Ball stepped outside and silently closed it, slightly blinded from the morning sunlight. The dense trees blocked a lot of the rays, fortunately.

Needing 'to go,' Bowling Ball trudged towards the showers and managed to get all the way to the entrance before remembering that the actual toilets were in the cabins. He groaned and turned to backtrack, but was distracted by Marble suddenly exiting the shower building. "Good morning!" he cheerfully greeted, trying to shake off

his sleepiness.

"Don't go inside the showers," she replied ominously.

"Huh?"

Marble jerked her thumb over the shoulder at the exit she'd just left. "It's ugly in there. You might not want to see a corpse this early in the morning."

Bowling Ball was shocked into silence. A corpse? But before he could ask who, the girl had disappeared around the corner of the building. The door he was close to entering moments ago suddenly seemed a lot more foreboding. Nervously, he reached out, twisted the knob, and slowly pushed the door open. On the other side...

...was Bone.

# Game over

More nightmares. Thankfully, they were much more muted this time around, and faded away before Flaggy became fully conscious, making it a mostly peaceful awakening. Eyes closed, she stretched on the floor, foggy memories of the video games she played last night filling her mind.

Something sharp poked her finger.

She froze. Still half-asleep, Flaggy forced her eyes open and glanced around, seeing the tranquil slumber of the others around her. At least, those which she could see from her vantage point on the floor.

The tiny point of pain pierced her awareness again, and she tried to locate a source. *Which finger? Pointer finger, right hand. No no,* left *hand.* She rotated her head to glance towards the couch, where her arm had wandered under overnight. Carefully, the girl felt around and immediately located something cold and hard. She pulled it out into the dim light.

A pair of scissors... *bloody* scissors. Flaggy's heart sped up until she realized that the blood was dry and crusty - it wasn't fresh, save for the single drop on her finger caused by the poke. But why were they there in the first place?

An ear-piercing scream permeated the room from nowhere, startling everyone else awake. Marshmallow bolted into an upright position and looked around frantically, panic already filling her eyes. Cheesy fell off the couch by accident and almost crushed Flaggy. TV snorted in his sleep, then his head shot up and slammed against the wall, while Bottle simply opened her eyes. Flaggy quickly shoved the scissors back under the couch for now - she didn't want them to see her holding a bloody weapon.

TV rubbed the back of his head, wincing. "What in the world...?"

"Did someone... scream?" Bottle wondered aloud. She massaged her eyelids carefully.

A sinking feeling grew in Flaggy's stomach. She recognized that scream. "Yeah. I... think someone's probably died."

---

The group of five eventually tracked the source of the scream down to the showers, where Bone and Bowling Ball were standing outside. They arrived at the same time as Brain, Suitcase, and WL4, who all arrived from their respective cabins. "What happened?" TV asked. "Is everyone alright? Who screamed?"

Bone replied, "I did." He was leaning heavily against the side of the shower building, one hand over his heart. He looked frazzled. "I'm not hurt, though. A minute ago, I walked into the showers from the other entrance and saw... F-Flower's body." Upon hearing this, WL4 sucked in a breath. "I froze, and then Bowling Ball entered from this door, and startled me... a lot."

Suitcase glanced around warily. "...where's Marble?"

"Inside," BB said. "Flower was taking a shower when she died so she's not... er... *decent* at the moment."

The door creaked open, making everyone jump. "Y'all can enter now," Marble's voice came from inside. "She's covered up."

Everyone exchanged glances and entered the showers, single-file. The interior wasn't much to look at — just concrete walls and floor, all painted white, with a wooden ceiling. Two opposite walls had four stalls each, for a total of eight showers. On the floor next to the stall closest to the door was presumably Flower's corpse, covered in a blanket with various plants decorating it.

WL4 looked at the covering. "Hey!" he said angrily in Marble's direction. "This is her blanket! You stole it from her bed in our cabin!"

"What? It's not like she needs it anymore," Marble countered.

"It's still extremely rude and disrespectful to steal a dead person's belongings."

"Oh, *I'm* the rude one here? I know I'm not the kindest around, but that's still rich, coming from you."

"Hey, hey!" Flaggy stepped between them before their conflict could escalate. "Let's get to the point here. Marble, do you know how Flower died?"

Marble shot one more glance at WL4 (who stuck his tongue out at her) before answering. "I believe so. See, that wire there-" She pointed towards a wire that snaked under the room's exit and over the top of the nearest stall's walls. "-was plugged into an outlet on the outside of the building. I think the murderer plugged it in, came through here while Flower was showering, and tossed the live end of the wire over the stall walls and electrocuted her."

Several people winced. "I couldn't see any other wounds, so I figured electrocution was the logical conclusion. She must have fallen over and knocked the stall door open when she died, because she was already on the floor when I got here," she concluded.

Curious, Cheesy grabbed the wire hanging into the stall and pulled on it hard. It, as well as something heavy attached to the other end, flew over and landed in Cheesy's arms. Fittingly enough, it was TV's mechanical arm. "Eugh!" the boy yelled, instinctively dropping the limb before remembering it wasn't flesh and blood. Most of the fake skin had been stripped away, leaving the multiple wires inside for everyone to see. Several had the copper filaments exposed to the open air, with some of them connected to the main wire leading outside.

"You clown." Marble shook her head. "If I hadn't already unplugged that from the outside outlet, you'd probably be dead."

"How did your arm get in here, TV?" Marshmallow questioned.

"I brought it back to my cabin yesterday and left it under my bed. Someone must have... broken in and stolen it while we were asleep in the lounge."

"Then the most logical line of questioning we should ask next is about the 'game night,'" said Brain. "Marble, Suitcase, and I were the only ones not to attend, correct?"

Bone gave him a sideways glance. "You *do* realize you just put yourself on the suspect list right?"

Brain shot him a condescending look. "I am not a simpleton. Now, it also seems that everyone who went to the lounge also fell asleep there. Who was the last one awake?"

"Uh, I... *think* it was me?" Marshmallow offered. "No, wait... almost. Me, WL4, and Bone were the last ones awake for a while, but I fell asleep before you guys, didn't I?"

"Yeah," WL4 confirmed, Bone backing him up with a nod. "Then Bone fell asleep right after you, and I only lasted for a few more minutes before conking out myself."

"Hmm," Brain hummed.

Hesitantly, Bowling Ball spoke up. "When I woke just a few minutes ago, Flower, WL4, and Bone were already somewhere else. Bone I encountered in here, but I don't know where WL4 went."

"I was hungry," WL4 stated plainly. "Besides, if you'd been bunking with Flower for the past couple of days, you'd be automatically waking up earlier too."

"...what do you mean?"

*"God."* He rolled his eyes. "Every morning, she wakes- er, woke- up at, like, 6 or something, to shower and put on make up and do her hair to 'make sure she's as beautiful as she can be.' And she's so LOUD about it. I haven't been able to sleep in at ALL since I got here."

The others turned to him. "So... you knew about Flower's showering schedule beforehand?" Flaggy clarified.

"Yeah. Why?"

"That means you're a prime suspect!" Bottle claimed cheerfully.

Warioy's eyes widened. Then he burst out laughing, clutching his stomach. "Oh! Oh, you guys think- hah! That's golden." He wiped away a tear. "You guys think *I* killed Flower? Nice joke."

Nobody laughed, not even Cheesy. WL4's smile slowly began to drop. "...you guys *are* joking, right?"

Bowling Ball and Suitcase glanced at each other. "I m-mean," Suitcase stuttered, "we don't know everything yet, but-"

"-but that one chunk of information puts you at the top of the suspect list," Brain finished. Suitcase reluctantly nodded agreement.

Marble opened her mouth to say something, but was cut off by WL4. "Well! if we're going to be pointing fingers, then I'm accusing Marble!" She started a little at this. "She's been acting suspicious the whole time we've been here, *and* she wasn't at the party! She had loads of chances last night to sneak around and kill people!"

"Oh, *really?* Well, first off," Marble began to counter, "I already explained to you all why I was absent for a while earlier. Second, I'm keeping to myself mostly because I don't trust the lot of you. Thirdly, your out-of-the-blue accusations just made you sound a lot more suspicious. And finally, if you'd please put aside your irrational hatred of me for *five seconds,* I can point out something nobody else seems to have noticed yet that could save your life."

All traces of malicious intent vanished from WL4's face, replaced by curiosity. "Really? What?"

"Nope. You lost your chance."

"Wh?? Oh come on, give me another!"

She just shook her head again. "Marble, you're being irrational about this," TV tried. "If you really do have an argument to support WL4's innocence, then-"

"Then *what?"* Marble snapped loudly, finally losing her cool. "Then we can go back to arguing about who the killer is? If all of you shitheads have missed something as simple as what I'm seeing *every* time someone was murdered, then it's no wonder the killer hasn't

been caught yet. And what's more, even if I tell you why WL4 is innocent, we've still got, what — four, five other suspects? We'd basically be back at square one! There's not much we can do other than try and use alibis to figure this out, but even *that* won't work very fucking well here, because everyone else was probably ASLEEP when Flower was murdered!! Let's face it — we're all trapped in this stupid murder mystery until the murdered off us all one by one."

Everybody was in a shocked silence, the only sound within the room being Marble's heavy breathing. After a moment, Bottle stepped towards the red-haired girl. "Marble-"

"Save it."

"But- WOAH!" Bottle instinctively yelped as Oodle materialized in front of her. "You startled me! Could you stop doing that, please?"

"Fine, next time, I'll walk through the door like a normal person," grumbled Oodle. "Anyway, you guys are running out of time."

"What!" Flaggy protested. "We've barely been talking for five minutes!"

Oodle simply shrugged sadly. "Sorry, Flagster. Them's the rules. You *do* technically have a couple more minutes, but I figured it'd be good to do a preliminary vote. All in favor of sparing Warioy?"

WL4 raised his hand, of course, and so did Bottle. Suitcase lifted hers hesitantly after a moment. Everyone else's silence revealed their answers. "Welp. That settles it."

The counselor pulled out a new die - this time, it was ten-sided, with everyone's face on one side except WL4's. He threw it onto the ground, where it rolled for what seemed like an eternity until it finally ceased. On the top face was the friendly face of Bowling Ball. "Oh god," BB said, putting his hands on his head. Suitcase just stared at him, desolation on her face.

Oodle held out the gun, not saying a word. Reluctantly, Bowling Ball took it. "Just p-point and shoot, and don't look," Suitcase whispered, trying to help. "It hurts l-less if you d-don't think about it."

That last part was a blatant lie.

Hands shaking ever-so-slightly, BB raised the gun and accidentally met WL4's eyes. They were full of sorrow and innocence, tears already streaming freely down his cheeks. Instantly, BB knew he couldn't pull the trigger. WL4 wasn't the killer, but the decision had already been made. There was no way it could end well.

Except...

"I..." Bowling Ball lowered the gun a tiny bit as a realization popped into his head. "I can end this." Before anyone could react, he swiftly swiveled the gun around until it was pointed straight at Oodle's chest and fired. An explosion of noise echoed around the room as a ridiculous amount of smoke bellowed from the gun's muzzle, obscuring the victim in gray.

Everyone stared at him in shock. "What the hell did you *DO?!"* Marshmallow yelled. "He was probably our only way out of here!"

"He was also the one *keeping* us here!" Bowling Ball cried back. "He... oh my god."

The smoke cleared, revealing an unharmed Oodle. He was staring at the ground in surprise, where a flattened bullet lay. There was a hole in the torso of his shirt, but the skin beneath was undamaged. The camp counselor slowly raised his head to look at BB, sadness and sympathy filling his eyes. "Oh, Bowling Ball..." he said softly.

Then he vanished.

Everyone freaked. "Where'd he go?" Cheesy yelled.

"What's going to happen now?"

"Why did you *shoot* him??"

"Oh god, oh god oh god oh god-"

"Wait, where's WL4?"

That made the others pause. As TV pointed out, WL4 had also

seemingly disappeared. Moments after he spoke, though, Oodle returned, minus one camper. His face was solemn. "Where's Warioy?" Bottle complained.

"Dead."

"...oh..."

"It gets worse." Oodle looked BB in the eye. "Bowling Ball, by not shooting WL4 after he had been chosen to die, you broke a rule. Therefore, I had to..." He didn't want to finish the sentence. Bowling Ball thought back to the first day they arrived, when Oodle explained the rules. *If anyone breaks a rule... then what?*

All the color drained from his face as he remembered. He looked at Oodle and opened his mouth, but no words came out. The man simply shook his head and answered the unasked question. "I'm sorry, Bowling Ball. But I had to kill your family."

TV's eyes widened. Flaggy, Marshmallow, and Bone stifled gasps, but Cheesy made no attempt to hide his. The ever-present smile on Bottle's face completely dropped, and even Marble and Brain looked uncomfortable. "M-mom?" Bowling Ball asked gingerly. "Dad? E-even Basketb-b-ball?"

Oodle nodded. "No," BB whispered, so softly that they barely heard him. "No, no, no no no nonononononooooooooooo..." The words eventually morphed into a harsh, choking sob that oppressively filled the tiny area. Tears also flowed down Suitcase's face, but she just hugged Bowling Ball and wordlessly, gently pulled him out of the room. Marshmallow trailed behind the duo at a distance.

Marble glanced at the remaining crowd. "So, not *one* of you saw that WL4 and Flower were friends..." She shook her head. "I'd spent less time near them than y'all had, but even *I* could see it was obvious."

Nobody else said a word as she turned and left. What was there to say?

**Hehe, did I getcha with that fake-out at the end of the last chapter?**

**We're back! Extra chapter today because of the delay, then I'll start uploading them regularly on weekends again. Not that there's very many left...**

**Speaking of getting close to the end, I'm curious: who do you think the killer is?**

# Brainstorming

*A/N: I recommend y'all quickly check the content warnings at the start of the "Read Me" chapter again, just in case :(*

Once the other campers split off away from the showers, Flaggy tracked down Bone. She found him sitting on a bunk alone in Cabin 6, of all places. He glanced up when she walked in and closed the door. "Uh, hello."

"Hi." She sat down on the cot across from him. "I have a question for you. A couple, actually. I don't know if you're the murderer or not, but I've noticed some odd actions from you while we've been at this mock camp." Bone tried to reply, but she kept going. "And if you *are* the murderer, don't try anything funny. I told TV I would try to track you down, so if I die, he'll know you did it," she bluffed.

Bone gulped. "Wh-what are your questions?"

Flaggy began to count off on her fingers. "While we were discussing Dicey's death, I noticed that you briefly sounded a lot more confident than usual. You're often pretty meek - I don't mean that in a bad way, but it seemed off. Then, the day after, I encountered you talking to yourself quietly, like you didn't want anyone to hear. Later, right before Marble came back, we were talking in the mess hall, and you sounded confident again during part of it. Your eyes changed color to a darker pink, and you ate my strawberry toast without even thinking about the fact that the jelly looked like blood. Finally, the easiest path from the lounge to the showers is by entering from the east side, but you said you went in from the *west* door." Flaggy inhaled. "I apologize in advance if this is some mental thing or whatever, but in this game, I can't leave anything to chance. Your personality has been flip-flopping the whole time we've been here, Bone, and I want to know *why."*

She sat back, breathing deeply after spewing out so many words. Bone stared at her, then chuckled. "You're more observant than I thought."

Flaggy sat back up, seeing that his eyes were more red than pink now. But they quickly shifted back to the original color. "Hey!" Bone hissed to himself.

"What?" Bone continued, eyes back to red. "She's figured us out. Might as well tell her."

"Go on..." Flaggy prompted.

His eyes turned pink once more, and Bone sighed, burying his face in his hands. "Do you... know what Dissociative Identity Disorder is?" he asked, voice muffled.

"I... think I've heard of it?"

"It's also called multiple personality disorder. That's essentially what th-this-" Bone waved at himself. "-is, sort of."

Flaggy stared at him. "So, you have two... personalities?"

"Yup!" he answered, suddenly sounding chipper. He lifted his face and his eyes were back to the red-tinged version. "I'm not sure when exactly I appeared, but it was at some point when we were pretty young. We've been stuck together since then, sharing memories, eyesight, etc. All those lovely senses."

Flaggy shook her head in confusion. "How do you do that? I've never seen someone with color-changing eyes before."

Bone shrugged. "Dunno. We're a bit of a special case. Nobody knows about us, except our parents and a couple of doctors."

"You keep referring to yourself as 'us,'" she noted. "You're really two separate people? Do you have different names?" She suddenly shook her head again. "No, no. I shouldn't be asking. This is private stuff."

As she watched, Bone's expression and eye color changed back to what seemed the norm. "It's fine... honestly, it's... a bit of a relief to

be able to tell someone again. And to answer your question, no, we don't have separate names. We're both 'Bone...' in a way. Although I'm... more so...? Since I was here first, i-if that makes sense. Since I rarely talk about this to anyone, I just refer to my alternate self as exactly that. Part of my mind."

The green-haired girl tried to absorb everything. "Wow. That's just... wow."

Bone shrugged. "You get used to it after a while."

"Hold on. Is that why the other kids from your school seem to hate you...?"

"Y-yeah. I don't remember the fine details, but at some point in elementary, I think s-someone made a bad comment about me. My alternate self took over and tried to defend us, but it only made the conflict worse. Other k-kids joined in, and a fight started, and... w-well. News was spread, opinions were made, and grudges were held." He forced out a single, humorless laugh. "And of course, everything only gets distorted with time. Fast forward till now, and basically every kid in my high school hates me."

Flaggy didn't know how to respond to that.

"Except the teachers," Bone added, now his other self. "Other kids I can't tolerate under the wrong circumstances, but I'm not gonna let my dominant self here get his grades tanked just cause I had some bone to pick with an adult." He chuckled. "Oh, Cheesy would love that joke."

For the second time, Flaggy sat back against the wall, speechless. "Jeez. I... I had no idea."

Bone's eyes shifted again. "Anyway... the reason I went through the showers' west entrance is because I - well, he - got up early to go search the other's cabins for any clues about p... past kills. Then, when we went into the showers, F... Flower's body just shocked both of us. We froze until Bowling Ball walked in from the other side. But!" His face hardened, yet his eye color stayed the same. This was still default Bone. "I'm not the murderer. And neither is he; he may be

a bit more... bold than I am, but I can assure you he's *not* a killer. The worst he's done was several black eyes during that elementary fight before we made a deal about no more physical conflicts."

Flaggy looked into his eyes. It seemed as if he was genuine, but if he had searched cabins that morning, could he have found TV's arm and...?

She stood up. "Well. Um. Thanks? For telling me, even though that was... kind of private."

"Well, if you need any more of his embarrassing secrets, just let me know!" the alternate said.

"Hey!"

She couldn't help but laugh a little at that.

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Some hours passed before Suitcase was finally able to persuade Bowling Ball to step outside again. They exited Cabin 4 and begin to slowly stroll down the main path which led to the rest of the camp. Suitcase pointed up. "Look at the sky. It's a beautiful day outside!"

Bowling Ball's eyes flicked up for half a second before returning to staring into the distance. "E-er," Suitcase stuttered. "There m-must be something we can do here. Do you wanna try making something at the Arts and Crafts cabin? Or play some video g-games?"

"No," he answered, barely hesitating. There was zero emotion in his voice. "Everywhere here is tainted with death."

"N-not everywhere! What about... w-what about the lake? We could go canoeing! It's the perfect weather for it."

"Ok," BB said, without any enthusiasm. Suitcase forced a small smile onto her face. It was progress.

They reached the main clearing. As they turned right to head towards the lake, Bowling Ball paused. His eyes flickered to the infirmary for a split second before locking onto the mess hall. "You... go on ahead,"

he said slowly. "I'll get a water bottle from the mess hall. It's hot out today."

"Good idea." Suitcase hesitated, reluctant to leave him alone, before convincing herself that maybe a bit of alone time was what he needed. She continued on towards the large body of water.

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*A few more hours later...*

Cheesy burst into the mess hall, sopping wet. Outside, despite it being past noon, the sky was dark with rain clouds, dousing the entire camp in a torrential downpour. "Jeez!" Cheesy said, shaking himself off like a wet dog. "It's crazy out there. Where the hell did this weather even *come* from?"

"I guess freak rainstorms just happen sometimes," Bottle said. She was sitting at a table with Bone and Marshmallow, all three of them slightly damp. At a different table, Brain sat alone, trying to wring his bow tie dry.

As Cheesy seated himself next to Bottle, he heard clanging coming from the kitchen. "Let me guess. TV's cooking us something warm?"

"Trying to," Bone replied. "Flaggy's helping him, but Marble's just making something for herself." Lightning flashed outside, followed immediately by a clap of thunder. "Eek!" he squeaked, before sighing. "Sorry. Not a fan of thunder."

From across the room, Brain cleared his throat. "Has anyone seen the depressed duo?"

Marsh glared at him. "First of all, not nice. Second of all, not since... euh... this morning."

"I have!" chirped Bottle. "I went to the lake earlier and saw them out in a canoe. I even waved! I don't think they saw me, though."

"A canoe? In this weather?? They're probably going to sink!" Bone cried. He got up from his chair and walked towards the exit. "I'm going to make sure they're alright, thunder be damned."

Another boom of noise made Marshmallow hesitate, but she decided to follow him outside. "Finally," Brain commented. "I thought he'd never leave."

"He seems like a nice enough guy! Why do you have a bone to pick with him?"

The well-dressed boy just sighed at Cheesy's joke.

Rain continued to endlessly patter against the windows and roof of the mess hall as its occupants munched on their burgers, courtesy of the usual cooks. Nobody had spoken for a while, but everyone was wondering where the others were.

The double exit doors were suddenly pushed open. Flaggy glanced up from her meal. "Hey guys! How are..."

Her fork clattered on her plate as it fell from her hand. A particularly bright bolt of lightning flashed, briefly outlining Bone. In his arms was the water-logged corpse of Bowling Ball.

Cheesy gasped. "Oh, that poor kid."

Stepping inside, Bone gently set BB down on the floor. A mixture of rain and tears dripped from his chin. "I'm so tired of all of this," he whispered.

"Wait," TV said. "Where's Marshmallow?"

"Here," spoke a feminine voice from the doorway. Everyone turned just as the usual thunderclap boomed, perfectly timed with Marshmallow's entrance. She unceremoniously dumped another body into the floor - Suitcase's.

"Oh, goodness," murmured Bottle softly, gently covering her mouth with one hand.

Marble looked between the two bodies disbelievingly. "No way."

Marshmallow slammed the doors shut and turned to face everyone else. Judging by the expression on her face, she was livid. Flaggy had never seen someone look so furious before. "Who," Marsh uttered, voice icy, "did this?"

Nobody answered.

"WHO?!" she screamed suddenly, causing them to jump.

"Calm down," said Brain. "Tell us how you think they died and we can discuss this."

Slowly, scarily, she rotated to look directly at Brain. *"You,"* she hissed.

The boy glanced behind him to make sure she wasn't referring to someone else, then pointed at himself. "Me?"

*"YOU."* Marshmallow took a step towards him. "You *must* have done this. You must have orchestrated ALL of this!"

"Hey, woah, hang on." Bone tried to calm her down. "What do you mean?"

Marshmallow breathed heavily. "The rest of you haven't shared a sleeping space with this guy for the last several days. He's smart. He writes down notes on everything he learns, but keeps it all to himself. He could have easily found a way to kill and frame everybody in the past. He's even hiding strength - I've seen him work out in the cabin. Maybe he's strong enough to pull back a bow!"

Flaggy blinked. "That... came completely out of nowhere. Um."

"I agree," Brain said as adjusted his glasses. "Those are some impressive accusations, Marshmallow."

"But are they true?" TV questioned.

"Partially. I do take notes, but I keep to myself because... well, Marble said it quite aptly earlier. I don't trust anyone. However, the statement about me working out is a blatant lie."

"Now *you're* the one lying," Marsh spat. "I've seen the way you mutter to yourself. Not like you're connecting pieces, but like you're planning."

Brain stared her down. "I *am* connecting pieces of the puzzle, sweetheart. And I'm nearly complete. There's just a few crucial pieces I'm missing. Something's nagging at me..."

"How convenient."

"Before you two get into a proper fight," interrupted Marble, "I feel like the elephant in the room should be addressed."

They waited. "Two bodies?" she prompted. "The killer, to quote our ever-so-gracious host, is 'only allowed to off one person at a time?'"

Everyone exchanged glances as they thought back to their first day. Marble slapped her forehead. "Seriously? How was I the *only* one to remember that it was against the rules to murder multiple people at once? I know what I said about everyone's observation skills earlier today, but this is ridiculous."

A cough. Oodle stepped into the building through the side door, as previously promised that morning. "Actually," he said, "this wasn't a murder."

Dead silence. Cheesy looked at Oodle, then at Suitcase's and Bowling Ball's bodies, then back to Oodle. "Do you... not see the two corpses lying on the ground here?"

"Oh, I see them. But I've also seen a lot more than you have." The host mentally prepared himself. "This was actually a double suicide."

The quiet suddenly became a lot heavier, to the point where the campers started to feel crushed underneath its oppressive weight. Seeing their expressions, Oodle elaborated. "Earlier today, when Suitcase invited Bowling Ball to go camping with her, he raided the infirmary for some cyanide, under the pretense that he was going to get them a bottle of water from this mess hall. Then, when they were out on the lake, he thanked her for being his friend, said goodbye, and..." He paused. "Suitcase tried to save him. But when she couldn't, she was so devastated that she drowned herself."

Flaggy covered her mouth. "That's... that's horrible."

Oodle looked at her sadly. "Happens all the time. But they were both innocent. So since the murderer didn't actually kill anyone this time around, you guys don't have to choose a suspect."

Marshmallow barely heard him. Her eyes were locked on the revolver in his belt holster, the gears inside her head turning like mad.

Brain snapped his fingers, attracting the others' attention. "That's it. The no double killing rule. That's the piece I was looki-"

***BANG.*** Brain's body twisted around, almost doing a full 360 before flopping to the floor. Shocked, everyone gaped at Marshmallow, who held Oodle's smoking revolver. "WHAT WAS *THAT?!"* Marble shouted before the life had even left Brain's eyes. "HE WAS ABOUT TO SOLVE SOMETHING!!"

Marshmallow lowered the gun, meeting her eyes. "He was probably just about to sow more chaos. It had to be him. It had to."

*"YOU DIDN'T KNOW THAT!"*

"Erm..." Bone glanced at Oodle awkwardly. "I hate to be the one to bring this up, but... the... rule breaking punishment? Did Marshmallow even.., break a rule?"

Still a little shell-shocked himself, Oodle plucked the revolver from Marsh's fingers and slid it back into his holster. "Uhm... technically... no...? I suppose I... never explicitly said you all *couldn't* kill someone when not discussing. It was only really a rule the other way around."

He coughed. "Also, it. Um. It wasn't Brain."

Marble put her face into her hands. "I told you."

One of Marshmallow's eyes twitched. She then threw her head back and *screamed* - a proper shriek of raw emotion. It was impossible to tell if it was anger, or sorrow, or something in between. Quite possibly both. The exclamation abruptly stopped as she snapped her jaw shut and stormed out of the mess hall, back into the literal storm. Flaggy could hear her muttering to herself as she passed.

The remaining six kids in the room all glanced at each other. Oodle had already disappeared. "Alright," TV finally said. His voice was hard as rock. "Tomorrow morning, we need to discuss about finding a way out of this hellhole."

# Putting it all together

It was a headache that woke Flaggy. Not the normal kind, but a proper migraine; one that makes you feel like an iron rod is embedded in your head, Phineas Gage style.

Nonetheless, she forced herself to get up. If TV and the others could actually figure a way out of Oodle's nightmarish game - *no no, not if, WHEN,* the thought to herself - she'd gladly endure anything to be part of that plan. Sleepily, she gazed around the cabin, seeing a neatly made bed across from hers. TV must have already left.

She got up, did her best to get ready in the bathroom, and found a note tacked to the exit door as she was leaving the cabin. *Meet me in the mess hall after you wake up,* it read.

Easy enough to understand, even in her condition. Flaggy exited and immediately sighed as she felt raindrops on her hat and shoulders. Evidently, the storm from yesterday hadn't fully let up, although it was more of a drizzle now. Still annoying, however; Flaggy and TV both had to spend several minutes the previous night drying out their clothes, and she wasn't looking forwards to having to repeat that action. *I hope TV managed to cover his exposed arm well enough,* she thought.

Even so, the drizzle was cool and refreshing, and it helped to wipe away a small portion of her migraine. Feeling ever-so-slightly revitalized, Flaggy continued walking, the now-mud pathway squishing under her shoes. She took the long route around the showers and, after eventually reaching Cabin 3, knocked on the door. "Bottle? Cheesy?" she asked loudly. Even the small increase in volume made her wince. "TV wants us to meet him at the mess hall."

"Five more minutes," Cheesy groaned sleepily from the other side.

She simply shrugged and turned back towards the main path. On the

intersection which led to the rest of the camp, she came across Bone. He was holding his cap over his head to protect himself from the rain. "Good morning," he said to her, clearly trying to sound somewhat upbeat.

"Hey," she croaked. "Where are the others?"

"Marble just threw a p-pillow at me when I tried to get her up, and Marshmallow didn't answer my knocks." He paused uneasily. "Her cabin door was locked and all the curtains were drawn shut in front of the windows. I'm... r-really worried about her."

Flaggy sighed. "Me, too. But... this'll sound cold, but I think we should leave everyone's psychological problems until after we get out of here."

They began to stroll together down the long path to the mess hall. "Speaking of," Bone said hesitantly, "who... who do you think it is?"

"The killer?"

Bone nodded. "Marble," replied Flaggy without even having to think about it. "You?"

"T... TV."

She halted, forcing him to stop walking too. *"What?* Why TV? He's trying to help us!"

Bone looked nervous. "Yeah, b-but... I don't know. Something doesn't seem right. The whole 'hacked' thing sounds t-too convenient, even if Marble really *did* have a laptop that belonged to Oodle. And with *his* arm electrocuting Flower..." He shook his head. "He had easy access to it."

"You haven't been around TV as much as I have here. He truly seems genuine about everything, including wanting to come up with an escape plan."

"F... fair enough. But what about Marble?"

"Actually, it's good that you asked. We should probably try to logic

this out as much as possible."

She leaned against a damp tree on the side of the path. "From the first day we got here, she's acted unusually. She disappeared during the first night, under the pretense that she was looking for Oodle's cabin, when for all we know, she could have just been killing and running back into the forest after. Then she returns a few days later, and the *next* day, TV gets hacked by a laptop that SHE got from Oodle. I don't think I believe her story about it being stolen." She took a deep breath before continuing. "And then, just yesterday, she claimed she was going to defend WL4's innocence, but then just decided to... not? Sure, WL4 was being rude, but what's up with that?"

Bone shrugged. "I-I mean, in her defense, she *did* sort of have a couple points when she lost her cool yesterday. But you do still raise a pretty good argument."

"Either way, I also partially see this as a process of elimination. Let's assume for the sake of argument that it's not either of us." Flaggy tapped one of her fingers for each person she ticked off the list. "I already gave my reasons for TV. Bottle's all about *preventing* death, from what I know. Cheesy would have never killed Box. And Marshmallow's confirmed safe, sooooo-"

"Wait, wait." He held up a hand to stop her. "How is Marshmallow *confirmed* innocent?"

"Well, when Dicey died, Marshmallow was with Bowling Ball and Suitcase at the time. They backed her up on this when we were discussing his death, remember? She literally could not have killed him, and there's only one murderer. Ergo, that just leaves Mar-"

*when Dicey died*

A realization hit her like a steam train. Oodle and Marble's words echoed in her head. *"The killer's only allowed to off one person at a time." When Dicey died,* she thought, *Barf Bag also died. But Barf Bag was definitely killed, since she had a stab wound in her neck. Which means Dicey really DID just fall down the stairs on his own, because he couldn't have also been *killed* by someone else due to that rule. And*

*Marshmallow left Bowling Ball and Suitcase to go get the others after Dicey fell, which means she was unaccounted for when Barf Bag died, which means SHE'S NOT COMPLETELY CONFIRMED INNOCENT.*

The pieces slid into place, one by one. *Barf Bag was killed in the lounge with an unknown weapon. Yesterday, I found a pair of scissors with blood on them underneath the lounge's couch. The only place to get scissors is from the Arts and Crafts cabin, which is where Marsh left from.*

*The first night, Marshmallow took food to Barf Bag and Fireball in the infirmary. She could have learned that Fireball would be sleeping there - alone, an easy target. Simple enough to sneak out in the middle of the night and inject her with some lethal drug from the same room.*

*Marsh could have been hiding her strength. I almost died when TV was strangling me, until Marsh came and pried two of his fingers off my throat, when Flower and WL4 combined could only get one. If she's that strong, maybe she's strong enough to shoot one of the reinforced bows from the archery range?*

*The day Marble returned, Marsh commented on how she didn't trust her at all. Marsh may have snooped around Marble's cabin and found Oodle's laptop, which may have allowed her to somehow hack into TV's right arm.*

*She was good friends with Suitcase and Bowling Ball, but they were also good alibis for her. When they died, she could have faked her anger and pinned the blame on Brain. They shared a cabin, and with Brain's intelligence, he could have figured her out eventually, given enough time. He almost DID, too, before MARSHMALLOW FUCKING SHOT HIM IN FRONT OF ALL OF US.*

Flaggy shot off the tree she was leaning against. "-shmallow," she finished, headache forgotten. "It's Marshmallow. *FUCK!!* We're so *STUPID!"* She punched the tree in frustration and immediately regretted it.

Not expecting the outburst, Bone leapt backwards slightly, almost dropping his hat. "W-what? But you just said-"

"I know, but... argh, there's no time to explain. Just- just get the others while I go tell TV. Quickly!" She pointed down the pathway

they'd just travelled.

Bone glanced at her warily, but started to backtrack anyway. Flaggy wasted no more time in rushing to the mess hall, closing the distance in record time. She burst through the double doors, panting heavily. "TV!" she shouted desperately. "TV! We figured it out, it's-"

She skidded to a halt. TV lay on the ground ahead of her, lifeless, both organically and mechanically. Standing over him was Marshmallow. Her torso and face were splattered in blood as she repeatedly stabbed TV's corpse, ripping out bits and wires with every other gash. Flaggy wasn't sure which was worse: the madness in Marshmallow's eyes, or the fading light in TV's.

Either way, she knew instantly and without a doubt that both expressions would be permanently seared into her memory until the day she died.

# And taking it apart again

For several seconds, Flaggy could only stare at the horrendous event in front of her. Thoughts raced through her mind, each one worst than the last. At the same time, it was like her brain had shut down. She couldn't move, or speak, or do anything.

Marshmallow finally stopped her unnecessarily gory act. Breathing heavily, she dropped the kitchen knife into TV's torso - the very same utensil used to slice off his arm three days previously. Several wires and other electronics were still gripped tightly in her left hand, but they were quickly let go the moment she looked up and saw Flaggy. Her insanity-filled expression cleared ever-so-slightly. "Err..."

Making eye contact with Marshmallow was enough to snap Flaggy out of her trance. She shook her head hard before looking back up. "S-stay where you are," she choked.

Marshmallow ran.

"HEY!" screamed Flaggy, immediately breaking into a sprint as well. "GET BACK HERE!!"

Both girls dashed out the side exit of the mess hall and into the morning drizzle. Marshmallow went east, towards the infirmary, but suddenly cut south and headed down the path that led to the lounge. Tears and raindrops began to blur Flaggy's vision somewhat, but determined, she wiped her wet hair out of her face and continued pursuing.

The lounge came into view. From ahead of Marsh, the door opened, and Marble stepped out. She hesitated when she saw the chase. "What?"

"MARBLE! IT'S MARSHMALLOW!" Flaggy shouted in desperation. "SHE- SHE KILLED TV!"

All it took was a quick glance at Marsh's blood-stained shirt to convince Marble, but before she could react, the murderous girl had already streamed past her, through the lounge and out the other door. Marble joined Flaggy in the chase.

Marshmallow took a hard left and Flaggy realized where she was going. *Her cabin. Who knows what weapons she might have stashed in there?* She did her best to increase her speed, but a sinking feeling told her that she wouldn't catch up in time.

Seconds before Marsh reached the door of Cabin 7, Cheesy dived out of the tree line and tackled her, football-style. They skidded through the mud in a flurry of limbs with Cheesy coming out on top. Pinning her to the ground, he began to punch her in the face mercilessly. "YOU— FUCKING— *BITCH!"* he screamed furiously between blows, tears starting to stream down his cheeks. "BOX NEVER DID ANYTHING TO YOU! WHY DID YOU KILL HIM? *WHY!?"*

"Cheesy, stop!!" cried Flaggy. But Cheesy didn't even hear her. He only ceased when Bone and Bottle came down the path and pulled him off of Marsh. Both kids were covered in mud. Marsh's face was a black-and-blue mess, bruises already forming where Cheesy had struck her. Her nose was clearly broken, the gushing blood mixing with the light rain on her face, and one of her eyes had already swollen shut.

Marble walked over, grabbed Marsh's arm, and yanked her to her feet, only to immediately slam her against the nearest tree. "I hope you appreciate what you've done, the hell that you've put us all through," she growled.

"Marble, *stop."* Flaggy wrenched the healthy girl away from the injured one. "It's... it's over. We've won, and we're alive. I-" Despite her tender throat, she took a deep, rattling breath, forcing her voice to stay steady. She desperately wanted to take out her anger as well, but she swallowed back several insults. "I want to get revenge, too, but any more violence is only going to worsen things." Now that Marshmallow had been stopped, she allowed the hot tears and rainwater to freely flow down her face.

"I couldn't have said it any better myself."

The five survivors turned around and were utterly unsurprised to see Oodle emerge from the dense forest holding a green umbrella. "This game *is* basically over," he agreed. "But first, let's give ol' Marshy Marsh a chance to explain how she dunnit all."

They looked back. Marshmallow coughed up some blood, having slid back down to the wet ground again but still leaning against the tree. "Oh, you want to know how I killed everyone?" She chuckled, then coughed again. "It would be my pleasure."

Marble groaned. *"Please.* We don't need any clichés."

Marsh ignored her and began to speak. "On that first night, when I took quesadillas to Barf Bag and Fireball, Barf Bag mentioned how Fireball should stay in the infirmary for the night to heal. It was so easy to sneak out later and find something lethal in the infirmary to inject her with."

"That day Dicey fell down the stairs - he really *did* just trip on his own, the clumsy little idiot. I left the arts and crafts cabin to get the others and found Barf Bag alone in the lounge. Now, I'd already swiped a pair of scissors from the A&C cabin when nobody was looking, and it was a risky move, but..." Marshmallow began to giggle.

"What's so funny?" demanded Bone.

She let it die off. "Oh, nothing. It's just..." Another quiet giggle escaped her split lips. "I guess you could say that killing Barf Bag was a *roll of the dice."*

The others would have groaned had the mood not been sour enough. "Jeez, tough crowd," Marsh muttered.

"Just get on with it," Cheesy spat.

"Yeah, yeah. For the record, me vomiting when I 'stumbled across' Barf Bag's body was totally real, as was me recovering the next day. Buuuut, I quickly got used to the blood. Anyways, y'all know how the archery range is really close to Cabin 2? You can get there and back within five minutes if you cut though the woods. The morning after I

was sick, I got up early, went there to grab a bow and arrow, and waited until Box left the cabin to go kill Conditioner. Stubborn girl didn't die the first time, so I had to shoot her twice. Then I just walked to the showers and took a quick one as an alibi."

*So she DID have hidden strength,* Flaggy thought to herself.

Marshmallow chuckled again. "Man, the discussion for *that* kill sure was a train wreck. It had its uses, though. I know my own strength, and I know those bows would have been nearly impossible for anyone else to draw back. Box-" Cheesy choked out a sob at the mention of the younger kid's name. "-made it extra easy by wanting to be alone for a while in the A&C cabin; all I had to do was sneak past Bottle, shoot the kid, and get out. She wasn't hard to get by. Your 'detective work' did the rest during the discussion."

Bone put his face in his hands as the murderer continued. "I will say, Marble, your disappearance and reappearance into and from the woods did concern me. I was the one who snuck into your cabin while you slept and stole the laptop."

"Rrrrr..." Marble growled again.

"You all already know that my attempt to hack TV's arm *nearly* worked, but I had to help save Flaggy to keep up appearances. I was stupid to stay around at the time. Too many people there. Looking back on it, it's pretty ironic that my own life was almost ended by my own means, in a roundabout way."

"As for Flower, I had kept an eye on her for the whole game. The moment I realized she had a showering schedule, I knew she was dead. Stealing TV's arm back was such a cinch — you guys should really be better at securing your cabins. After that, I only had to go back to the lounge and pretend to be asleep on the floor."

"Shut up shut up shut UP" Cheesy whimpered, hands on the sides of his head. Bottle placed a palm on his back for support.

Marshmallow's face darkened. "God, I'm STILL pissed at Bowling Ball and Suitcase for offing themselves like that. They were my best alibis." Nobody knew how to even respond to such a horrendous

statement. "My anger and frustration yesterday at that was completely real, but it *was* also a good front to get rid of that meddling Brain. He almost caught me, too. Of course I had to get the *smart* one as a cabin mate."

"And TV?" Flaggy prompted, unsure if she actually wanted the answer or not.

"Oh, I just killed him so that his escape plan couldn't be formed."

Bone gaped at her. "But... *why!?* If we had managed to figure something out, you could have escaped as well!!"

Marsh smiled a creepy smile at him through the strands of wet hair half-covering her face. "Haven't you figured it out yet? There *was* no 'escape plan.' At least, not one that would have worked. Even if we somehow managed to get outside the invisible barrier surrounding this place, Oodle's higher-ups would just order him to teleport us back. Or worse. The only way out of this game is for the killer to kill, and the killer is me. I hold all the power here!"

A laugh bubbled up from inside her. It started quietly at first, but rapidly grew into something resembling maniacal. And in that moment, the others realized what had truly happened to her. Marshmallow may have been fine mentally when she got here, but Bowling Ball's and Suitcase's deaths were the last straw. Any remaining thread of sanity Marsh may have possessed had snapped in the previous night's storm. She'd been driven off the edge of insanity.

The unnerving cackling eventually petered off, replaced by more coughing. In turn, Oodle cleared his throat. "Well. We're... almost... done here. But there's still a couple things to do before I send you guys back home."

"Are you SERIOUS?" complained Marble. "I know you don't like doing this, but can't you just let us GO already?"

"I'm still as bound by the rules as you are," Oodle replied sadly. He pulled out a regular 6-sided die and everyone's eyes widened. "The murderer has been outed. Now we have to choose who'll end the life of one who ended so many others."

"Poetic," Bone muttered, his eyes crimson.

Oodle dropped the die on the muddy grass unceremoniously. Flaggy saw her face flash by, as well as everybody else's, even Marshmallow's (although hers was X'ed out). Finally, it settled. The face-up face was kind; one who always smiled and saw the best in others, even if it was a little goofy at times.

The person in question stared at it uncomprehendingly, a smile frozen on their face. "What?"

The lines on Oodle's face only deepened as he handed his revolver to Bottle. Even he didn't have any words to this.

Bottle took the revolver before she fully realized what was happening. Her smile began to falter. "B-but I... I... I can't shoot someone. That's not preventing death..."

"You know what happens if you don't."

Smile gone completely now, Bottle turned to Marshmallow and lifted the weapon almost in a trance. She hesitated, obviously reluctant. The others tensed.

"Well?" Marshmallow croaked. She spat blood onto the grass. "Do it."

Bottle remained silent and frozen. Rolling her eyes, Marshmallow slowly got to her feet, groaning in pain the whole way, then swiftly thrust her forehead in front the barrel. *"DO IT!!!"* she shrieked, loud enough to make Bottle flinch and

*bang*

pull the trigger.

Marshmallow fell to the grass, dead. A fresh hole in her head began to add to the already existing pool of blood on the path.

Bottle's hands shook. The gun slipped from her fingers. "I... I..."

"Hey." Voice quiet, Cheesy placed a hand on her shoulder. He no longer looked angry at anything, only sad. "It's ok. It's alright."

Bottle looked at him. "No. It's- it's not ok." She put a hand to her forehead and chuckled nervously, unsettlingly. Her eyes were crazed. "All my life, I've been dedicated to helping save other's lives. I *have* saved other's lives. Prevented death. But now I've created it. What does that make me? A hypocrite?"

"No, no! Not in the slightest! It-"

Cheesy cut himself off as he witnessed the mad smile form on Bottle's face. When she looked him in the eye, what he saw there terrified him. "I'm a murderer, aren't I?" she whispered.

He opened his mouth to rebuke her, to remind her that she had been forced into it, but she wrenched away from his grasp and paced in circles, muttering inanely to herself.

Bone carefully approached Cheesy. "She'll... she'll heal eventually. I'm sure of it."

"I'm not sure of anything anymore," he whispered back. Tears were leaking down his face again, no longer mixed with raindrops. The light drizzling had stopped at some point. None of them were sure when.

Oodle picked up the now empty revolver from the ground and shook the mud off it. "Huh. Six bullets for six accused. I didn't even have to reload once."

Marble just looked at him. She didn't even seem angry anymore either, just tired and defeated. "Can we please go home now?"

"Almost." Oodle brightened as he remembered what he was about to say. "But I promise you guys that this last thing is good news."

"Anything related to this game can't possibly be good, unless you're about to send us-"

"I talked to my superiors and managed to convince them to revive someone."

That stopped Marble in her tracks. Flaggy gaped at Oodle as well. *"What."* Bone stated. "They can just... bring someone *back??"*

"Ayyyyyup."

"Then why put us in this pointless game?" Marble shouted, suddenly angry once again. "Why not just revive everybody who died, except for that murderous little bitch, and return us ALL to our homes??"

"The higher-ups prefer the term *recover.* And you already know why I can't just go against their orders."

Marble clammed up.

Oodle raised a finger into the air and slowly lowered it. "Flaggy," he said suddenly. "Since you're the one who figured it all out, you get to choose who comes back to life."

He pointed directly at the green-haired girl, taking her by surprise. "...are you serious?"

"Yes!"

"I... w... wow. Ok. Um." Flaggy began to think hard. TV jumped right to the front of her mind, but as tempted as she was to choose him right away, she kept pondering her options. Conditioner, 3D-Printed Naily, Envelope... there weren't many people she particularly wanted back. She also thought of Suitcase or Bowling Ball, but choosing one over the other would likely not result in a happy recovery. TV seemed like the best option.

Then she wondered, *Who might the OTHERS want back?*

And the second she looked and saw Cheesy's hopeful, pleading eyes, Flaggy knew her decision had already been made for her. She quickly turned to Oodle, saying only one word: "Box."

The counselor smiled warmly. He snapped his fingers and, out of thin air, Box materialized. The boy appeared confused at first, looking down at his hands, then gently patting his chest as if searching for a hole.

"B...Box?" Cheesy stuttered quietly.

The younger kid looked up as Cheesy stepped forwards and slowly,

very carefully, touched Box's head to make sure he was real. "BOX!!" he shouted suddenly, grabbing the kid in a hug and lifting him off the ground. He was openly crying once more, this time out of jubilation, tears spilling onto Box's mess of dirty blond hair. "Oh my stars! I- I can't believe you're really alive!! Ahahahaha!! I missed ya, kid!"

Flaggy's eyes shone. Bone suddenly broke out in tears too, just from the sheer joy he was witnessing. Marble smiled a little and placed a hand on her hip. "I'm not really one for sappy stuff, but I gotta admit, that... does put a smile on my face." Even Bottle's eyes seemed to clear a little momentarily, but she quickly went back to quiet, incoherent rambles.

Cheesy set Box down suddenly and placed his hands on his shoulders. "Kid, I read your letter, and *yes,* I will *absolutely* come take you from your parents. Wow, that sounded bad. Your *abusive* parents. I'll take care of you like you really are my little bro, and-" He gasped. "I don't know your address! Quick, spell it out for me!"

Box spelled out the name of his address as fast as he could, which still wasn't very fast. "Alright. Alright, I'll remember that. I'll come by tonight, ok?" he promised. Box nodded back and Cheesy hugged him again. "God, I still can't believe you're really here."

Wiping his face, Cheesy stood up and turned to Oodle. "I think we're ready to go home."

"Yes, *please,"* Marble agreed eagerly. "I never want to see another summer camp again in my life."

Oodle rubbed away a tear of his own. "Don't worry, it's time." He looked at them all. "For what it's worth, I... I really, truly am sorry about forcing you all into this horrible game. If I had any choice whatsoever, none of this would have happened. I can't change anything now, but... I hope you all at least understand that."

Flaggy glanced at the other survivors — Bottle, Cheesy, Marble, Bone, and Box. *One from each school,* she realized. "I... think I do," she said. "I don't like it, but I understand."

"Thank you."

Oodle raised his hands. Cheesy glanced over at Bottle, who was still chattering maniacally to herself, and whispered, "You helped me so much here. Once I get Box away from his shitty life, I'll find you, too, and repay you for all the help you've given me. I promise."

Bottle looked at him uncomprehendingly. Oodle brought his hands together, and with one tremendous clap, everyone's vision went black.

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Opening her eyes, Flaggy found herself in a familiar room, lying on a familiar bed. A cursory glance revealed that the room was the attic of her family's house - her bedroom.

The familiar surroundings instantly comforted her and made her feel more relaxed than she had been in over a week. Eight days of hell, finally over. She closed her eyes again momentarily, taking a deep, deep breath and absorbing the familiar musty smell that came with sleeping in an attic.

*Was it all just a dream?* she suddenly wondered in the most cliché way possible. She gently pressed against the side of her throat and winced. *Nope. Still hurts. Not a dream.*

"Flaggy?"

She quickly opened her eyes again and sat up to see her mom at the top of the stairs leading into the room. "M-mom?"

"Oh- oh my goodness, I-" Unable to form a proper sentence, her mom dropped the basket she was holding and rushed over, enveloping her daughter in a warm hug. "Where- what- how- no, that can wait. Oh, I'm so glad you're back!!"

Dumbfounded, but happier than ever, Flaggy slowly returned the embrace. Tears began to pour out of both of them, even though Flaggy thought she had already run dry after TV's death. But that didn't matter. Nothing else mattered at the moment.

She was home.

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ngl that ending is corny as hell lol

I'm curious, *if* any of you thought/figured out that it was Marshmallow before it was revealed in the previous chapter, what gave it away? Although it was definitely possible to figure out beforehand, I deliberately made the hints subtle, but I don't know if some of them were *too* subtle or not.

I suppose I don't really have much else to say here, except to thank Zapz, Funfunny, and my sister again for making the wonderful art of the cast. (If you want to look at it again, it's in the first chapter after
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the "Read Me" warning.)

Stay safe! :)

- Jabe